David Irving

HITLER'S WAR

and The War Path

'Two books in English stand out from the vast literature of the Second World War: Chester Wilmot's *The Struggle for Europe*, published in 1952, and David Irving's *Hitler's War*'

JOHN KEEGAN, *Times Literary Supplement*

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FOCAL POINT



Twenty years still to go: Wealthy benefactor Lotte Bechstein took this snapshot of Adolf Hitler, then 36, at the balustrade of the villa that became the Berghof, after his release from Landsberg prison in 1925 (AUTHOR'S COLLECTION)

A Doctor quotes Hitler on Biographers, in August 1944

A FOREIGNER, *said Hitler, 'probably finds it easier to pass judgment on a statesman, provided he is familiar with the country, its people, its language, and its archives.*

"'Presumably," I said, "Chamier didn't know the Kaiser personally, as he was still relatively young. But his book not only shows a precise knowledge of the archives and papers, but relies on what are after all many personal items, like the Kaiser's letters and written memoranda of conversations with friends and enemies."

"'Hitler then said that for some time now he has gone over to having all important discussions and military conferences recorded for posterity by shorthand writers. And perhaps one day after he is dead and buried an objective Englishman will come and give him the same kind of impartial treatment. The present generation neither can nor will.'" —The Diary of Dr Erwin Giesing, on a discussion with Hitler about the Kaiser's English biographer J. D. Chamier (AUTHOR'S COLLECTION)

David Irving is the son of a Royal Navy commander. Imperfectly educated at London's Imperial College of Science & Technology and at University College, he subsequently spent a year in Germany working in a steel mill and perfecting his fluency in the language. Among his thirty books (including three in German), the best-known include HITLER'S WAR; THE TRAIL OF THE FOX: THE LIFE OF FIELD MARSHAL ROMMEL; ACCIDENT, THE DEATH OF GENERAL SIKORSKI; THE RISE AND FALL OF THE LUFTWAFFE; GÖRING: A BIOGRAPHY, and NUREMBERG, THE LAST BATTLE. He has translated several works by other authors including the autobiographies by Field-Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, General Reinhard Gehlen, and Nikki Lauda. He lives near Grosvenor Square, London, and has raised five daughters.

In 1963 he published THE DESTRUCTION OF DRESDEN. This became a best-seller in many countries. In 1996 he issued a revised edition, APOCALYPSE 1945, as well as his important biography, GOEBBELS. MASTERMIND OF THE THIRD REICH. A second volume of CHURCHILL'S WAR appeared in 2001 and he is now completing the third. His works are available as free downloads on our Internet website at www.fpp.co.uk/books.

for Josephine Irving

IN MEMORIAM 1963 – 1999



HITLER'S WAR was first published by The Viking Press (New York) and Hodder & Stoughton (London) in 1977; THE WAR PATH was published by The Viking Press and Michael Joseph Ltd in 1979. Macmillan Ltd continued to publish these volumes until 1991. We published a revised edition of both volumes in 1991. HITLER'S WAR AND THE WAR PATH has been extensively revised and expanded on the basis of materials available since then. The volume is also available as a free download from our website at www.fpp.co.uk/books.

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Introduction

'To historians is granted a talent that even the gods are denied – to alter what has already happened!'

I bore this scornful saying in mind when I embarked on this study of Adolf Hitler's twelve years of absolute power. I saw myself as a stone cleaner – less concerned with architectural appraisal than with scrubbing years of grime and discoloration from the facade of a silent and forbidding monument. I set out to describe events from behind the Führer's desk, seeing each episode through his eyes. The technique necessarily narrows the field of view, but it does help to explain decisions that are otherwise inexplicable. Nobody that I knew of had attempted this before, but it seemed worth the effort: after all, Hitler's war left forty million dead and caused all of Europe and half of Asia to be wasted by fire and explosives; it destroyed Hitler's 'Third Reich,' bankrupted Britain and lost her the Empire, and it brought lasting disorder to the world's affairs; it saw the entrenchment of communism in one continent, and its emergence in another.

In earlier books I had relied on the primary records of the period rather than published literature, which contained too many pitfalls for the historian. I naïvely supposed that the same primary sources technique could within five years be applied to a study of Hitler. In fact it would be thirteen years before the first volume, *Hitler's War*, was published in 1977 and twenty years later I was still indexing and adding to my documentary files. I remember, in 1965, driving down to Tilbury Docks to collect a crate of microfilms ordered from the U.S. government for this study; the liner that brought the crate has long been scrapped, the dockyard itself levelled to the ground. I suppose I took it all at a far too leisurely pace. I hope however that this biography, now updated and revised, will outlive its rivals, and that more and more future writers find themselves compelled to consult it for

materials that are contained in none of the others. Travelling around the world I have found that it has split the community of academic historians from top to bottom, particularly in the controversy around 'the Holocaust.' In Australia alone, students from the universities of New South Wales and Western Australia have told me that there they are penalised for citing *Hitler's War*; at the universities of Wollongong and Canberra students are disciplined if they don't. The biography was required reading for officers at military academies from Sandhurst to West Point, New York, and Carlisle, Pennsylvania, until special-interest groups applied pressure to the commanding officers of those seats of learning; in its time it attracted critical praise from the experts behind the Iron Curtain and from the denizens of the Far Right.

Not everybody was content. As the author of this work I have had my home smashed into by thugs, my family terrorised, my name smeared, my printers firebombed, and myself arrested and deported by tiny, democratic Austria – an illegal act, their courts decided, for which the ministerial culprits were punished; at the behest of disaffected academics and influential citizens, in subsequent years, I was deported from Canada (in 1992), and refused entry to Australia, New Zealand, Italy, South Africa, and other civilised countries around the world (in 1993).

In my absence, internationally affiliated groups circulated letters to librarians, pleading for this book to be taken off their shelves. From time to time copies of these letters were shown to me. A journalist for *Time* magazine dining with me in New York in 1988 remarked, 'Before coming over I read the clippings files on you. Until *Hitler's War* you couldn't put a foot wrong, you were the darling of the media; but after it . . .'

I offer no apology for having revised the existing picture of the man. I have tried to accord to him the kind of hearing that he would have got in an English court of law – where the normal rules of evidence apply, but also where a measure of insight is appropriate.

There have been sceptics who questioned whether the heavy reliance on – inevitably angled – private sources is any better as a method of investigation than the more traditional quarries of information. My reply is that we certainly cannot deny the value of private sources altogether. As the *Washington Post* noted in its review of the first edition in 1977, 'British historians have always been more objective toward Hitler than either German or American writers.'

MY CONCLUSIONS on completing the manuscript startled even me. Hitler was a far less omnipotent Führer than had been believed, and his grip on his subordinates had weakened with each passing year. Three episodes – the aftermath of the Ernst Röhm affair of June 30, 1934, the Dollfuss assassination a month later, and the anti-Jewish outrages of November 1938 – show how his powers had been pre-empted by men to whom he felt himself in one way or another indebted. While my Hitler's central and guiding pre-war ambition always remains constant, his methods and tactics were profoundly opportunistic. Hitler firmly believed in grasping at fleeting opportunities. 'There is but one moment when the Goddess of Fortune wafts by,' he lectured his adjutants in 1938, 'and if you don't grab her then by the hem you won't get a second chance!' The manner in which he seized upon the double scandal in January 1938 to divest himself of the over conservative army Commander in Chief, Werner von Fritsch, and to become his own Supreme Commander too, is a good example.

His geographical ambitions remained unchanged. He had no ambitions against Britain or her Empire at all, and all the captured records solidly bear this out. He had certainly built the wrong air force and the wrong navy for a sustained campaign against the British Isles; and subtle indications, like his instructions to Fritz Todt (page 21) to erect huge monuments on the Reich's western frontiers, suggest that for Hitler these frontiers were of a lasting nature. There is equally solid proof of his plans to invade the east – his secret speech of February 1933 (page 25), his memorandum of August 1936 (pages 40–41), his June 1937 instructions for the expansion of Pillau as a Baltic naval base (page 50), and his remarks to Mussolini in May 1938 (page 88), that 'Germany will step out along the ancient Teutonic path, toward the east.' Not until later that month, it turns out (page 92), did Hitler finally resign himself to the likelihood that Britain and France would probably not stand aside.

These last pre-war years saw Hitler's intensive reliance on psychological warfare techniques. The principle was not new: Napoleon himself had defined it thus: 'The reputation of one's arms in war is everything, and equivalent to real forces.' By using the records of the propaganda ministry and various editorial offices I have tried to illustrate how advanced the Nazis were in these 'cold war' techniques. Related to this theme is my emphasis on Hitler's foreign Intelligence sources. The Nazis' wiretapping and code breaking agency, the Forschungsamt, which destroyed all its records in 1945, holds the key to many of his successes. The agency eavesdropped on foreign

diplomats in Berlin and – even more significantly – it fed to Hitler hour by hour transcripts of the lurid and incautious telephone conversations conducted between an embattled Prague and the Czech diplomats in London and Paris during September 1938 (pages 118–126). From the time of Munich until the outbreak of war with Britain Hitler could follow virtually hourly how his enemies were reacting to each Nazi ploy, and he rightly deduced by August 22, 1939, that while the western powers might well formally declare war they would not actually fight – not at first, that is.

The war years saw Hitler as a powerful and relentless military commander, the inspiration behind great victories like the Battle of France in May 1940 and the Battle of Kharkov in May 1942; even Marshal Zhukov later privately admitted that Hitler's summer 1941 strategy – rather than the general staff's frontal assault on Moscow – was unquestionably right. At the same time however Hitler became a lax and indecisive *political* leader, who allowed affairs of state to stagnate. Though often brutal and insensitive, he lacked the ability to be ruthless where it mattered most. He refused to bomb London itself until Mr. Churchill forced the decision on him in late August 1940. He was reluctant to impose the test of total mobilisation on the German 'master race' until it was too late to matter, so that with munitions factories crying out for manpower, idle German housewives were still employing half a million domestic servants to dust their homes and polish their furniture. Hitler's military irresolution sometimes showed through, for example in his panicky vacillation at times of crisis like the battle for Narvik in 1940. He took ineffectual measures against his enemies inside Germany for too long, and seems to have been unable to act effectively against strong opposition at the very heart of his High Command. In fact he suffered incompetent ministers and generals far longer than the Allied leaders did. He failed to unite the feuding factions of Party and Wehrmacht for the common cause, and he proved incapable of stifling the corrosive hatred of the War Department (OKH) for the Wehrmacht High Command (OKW).

I believe that I show in this book that the more hermetically Hitler locked himself away behind the barbed wire and minefields of his remote military headquarters, the more his Germany became a Führer Staat without a Führer. Domestic policy was controlled by whoever was most powerful in each sector – by Hermann Göring as head of the powerful economics agency, the Four Year Plan; by Hans Lammers as chief of the Reich chancellery; or by Martin Bormann, the Nazi Party boss; or by Heinrich Himmler, minister of the interior and Reichsführer of the evil famed SS.

HITLER WAS a problem, a puzzle to even his most intimate advisers. Joachim von Ribbentrop, his foreign minister, wrote in his Nuremberg prison cell in 1945:

> I got to know Adolf Hitler more closely in 1933. If I am asked to day however whether I knew him well – how he thought as a politician and statesman, what kind of man he was – then I'm bound to confess that I know only very little about him; really, nothing at all. The fact is that although I went through so much together with him, in all the years of working with him I never came closer to him than on the first day we met, either personally or otherwise.

The sheer complexity of that character is evident from a comparison of his brutality in some respects with his almost maudlin sentimentality and stubborn adherence to military conventions that others had long abandoned. We find him cold bloodedly ordering a hundred hostages executed for every German occupation soldier killed; dictating the massacre of Italian officers who had turned their weapons against German troops in 1943; ordering the liquidation of Red Army commissars, Allied commando troops, and captured Allied aircrews; in 1942 he announced that the male populations of Stalingrad and Leningrad were to be exterminated. He justified all these orders by the expediencies of war. Yet the same Hitler indignantly exclaimed, in the last week of his life, that Soviet tanks were flying the Nazi swastika as a ruse during street fighting in Berlin, and he flatly forbade his Wehrmacht to violate flag rules. He had opposed every suggestion for the use of poison gases, as that would violate the Geneva Protocol; at that time Germany alone had manufactured the potentially war winning lethal nerve gases Sarin and Tabun. In an age in which the governments of the democracies attempted, engineered, or condoned the assassinations, successfully or otherwise, of the inconvenient* – from General Sikorski, Admiral Darlan, Field Marshal Rommel, and King Boris of Bulgaria to Fidel Castro, Patrice Lumumba, and Salvador Allende – we learn that Hitler, the world's most unscrupulous dictator, not only *never* resorted to the assassination of foreign opponents but flatly forbade his Abwehr to attempt it. In particular he rejected Admiral Canaris's plans to assassinate the Red Army General Staff.

* The CIA documents on planned assassinations and assassination techniques can now be viewed on the George Washington University website, at *www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv*.

The biggest problem in dealing analytically with Hitler is the aversion to him deliberately created by years of intense wartime propaganda and emotive post-war historiography. I came to the subject with almost neutral feelings. My own impression of the war was limited to snapshot memories – 1940 summer picnics around the wreckage of a Heinkel bomber in the local Bluebell Woods; the infernal organ note of the V 1 flying bombs passing overhead; convoys of drab army trucks rumbling past our country gate; counting the gaps in the American bomber squadrons straggling back each day from Germany; waving to the troopships sailing in June 1944 from Southsea beach to Normandy; and of course, VE day itself, with the bonfires and beating of the family gong. Our knowledge of the Germans 'responsible' for all this was not profound. In *Everybody's* magazine, long defunct, I recall 'Ferrier's World Searchlight' with its weekly caricatures of a clubfooted dwarf called Goebbels and the other comic Nazi heroes.

The caricatures have bedevilled the writing of modern history ever since. Confronted by the phenomenon of Hitler himself, historians cannot grasp that he was a walking, talking human weighing some 155 pounds with greying hair, largely false teeth, and chronic digestive ailments. He is to them the Devil incarnate: he *has* to be, because of the sacrifices that we made in destroying him.

The caricaturing process became respectable at the Nuremberg war crimes trials. History has been plagued since then by the prosecution teams' methods of selecting exhibits and by the subsequent publication of them in neatly printed and indexed volumes and the incineration of any document that might have hindered the prosecution effort. At Nuremberg the blame for what happened was shifted from general to minister, from minister to Party official, and from all of them invariably to Hitler. Under the system of 'licensed' publishers and newspapers established by the victors in post-war Germany the legends prospered. No story was too absurd to gain credence in the history books and memoirs.

Among these creative writers the German General Staff take pride of place. Without Hitler few of them would have risen above colonel. They owed him their jobs, their medals, their estates and endowments, and not infrequently their victories too. After the war those who survived – which was sometimes because they had been dismissed and thus removed from the hazards of the battlefield – contrived to divert the blame for final defeat. In the files of Nuremberg prosecutor Justice Robert H. Jackson I found a note warning about the tactics that General Franz Halder, the former chief

of General Staff, proposed to adopt: 'I just wanted to call your attention to the CSDIC intercepts of Halder's conversations with other generals. He is extremely frank on what he thinks should be suppressed or distorted and in particular is very sensitive to the suggestion that the German General Staff was involved in anything, especially planning for war.'

Fortunately this embarrassed offsetting between conscience and memory was more than once recorded for posterity by the hidden microphones of the CSDIC (Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre). Thus the cavalry general Rothkirch, the III Corps commander, captured at Bitburg on March 6, 1945, was overheard three days later describing how he had personally liquidated Jews in a small town near Vitebsk, Russia, and how he had been warned not to disturb mass graves near Minsk as these were about to be exhumed and incinerated so as to destroy all traces. 'I have decided,' he told fellow prisoners, 'to twist every statement I make so that the officer corps is white washed – *relentlessly, relentlessly!*' * And when General Heinz Guderian and the arrogant, supercilious General Leo Geyr von Schweppenburg were asked by their American captors to write their own history of the war, they first sought Field Marshal Wilhelm Leeb's permission as senior officer at the Seventh Army's CSDIC. Again hidden microphones recorded their talk:

> LEEB: Well, I can only give you my personal opinion. . . . You will have to weigh your answers carefully when they pertain to objectives, causes, and the progress of operations, in order to see where they may impinge on the interests of our Fatherland. On the one hand we have to admit that the Americans know the course of operations quite accurately; they even know which units were employed on our side. However they are not quite so familiar with our motives. And there is one point where it would be advisable to proceed with caution, so that we do not become the laughingstock of the world. I do not know what your relations were with Hitler, but I do know his military capacity. . . . You will have to consider your answers a bit carefully when approached on this subject so that you say nothing that might embarrass our Fatherland. . . .
>
> GEYR VON SCHWEPPENBURG: The types of madness known to psychologists cannot be compared with the one the Führer suffered from.

* CSDIC (UK) report SRGG.1133, March 9, 1945, in Public Record Office, London, file WO.208/4169.

> He was a madman surrounded by serfs. I do not think we should express ourselves quite as strongly as that in our statements. Mention of this fact will have to be made, however, in order to exonerate a few persons.

After agonising over which German generals, if any, advocated war in 1939, Leeb suggested: 'The question is now whether we should not just admit openly everything we know.'

> GEYR: Any objective observer will admit that National Socialism did raise the social status of the worker, and in some respects even his standard of living.
>
> LEEB: This is one of the great achievements of National Socialism. The excesses of National Socialism were in the first and final analysis due to the Führer's personality.
>
> GUDERIAN: The fundamental principles were fine.
>
> LEEB: That is true.

In writing this biography I therefore adopted strict criteria in selecting my source material. I have used not only the military records and archives; I have burrowed deep into the contemporary writings of his closest personal staff, seeking clues to the real truth in diaries and private letters written to wives and friends. For the few autobiographical works I have used I preferred to rely on their original manuscripts rather than the printed texts, as in the early post-war years apprehensive publishers (especially the 'licensed' ones in Germany) made drastic changes in them – for example in the memoirs of Karl Wilhelm Krause, Hitler's manservant. Thus I relied on the original handwritten memoirs of Walter Schellenberg, Himmler's Intelligence chief, rather than on the mutilated and ghost-written version subsequently published by André Deutsch.

I would go so far as to warn against several works hitherto accepted as 'standard' sources on Hitler – particularly those by Konrad Heiden, the Abwehr/OSS double agent Hans Bernd Gisevius, Erich Kordt, and Hitler's dismissed adjutant Fritz Wiedemann. (The latter unashamedly explained in a private 1940 letter to a friend, 'It makes no difference if exaggerations and even falsehoods do creep in.') Professor Carl Jakob Burckhardt's 'diary' quoted in his memoir, *Meine Danziger Mission 1937–1939*, is impossible to reconcile with Hitler's actual movements; while Hermann Rauschning's

Conversations with Hitler (Zürich, 1940) has bedevilled analysis of Hitler's policies ever since it was published by the evil propagandist Emery Reves (Imre Revész) along with a host of other fables. Rauschning, a former Nazi Danzig politician, met Hitler on only a couple of formal occasions. It was being republished in Vienna as recently as 1973, although even the otherwise uncritical West German historian Professor Eberhard Jäckel – who carelessly included 78 forgeries in a serious volume of Hitler's manuscripts, and then dismissed this poisonous injection as making up less than 5 percent of the total volume! – emphasised in a learned article in *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* (No. 11, 1977) that Rauschning's volume has no claim to credibility at all. Reves was also publisher of that other famous 'source' on early Nazi history, Fritz Thyssen's 'memoirs,' *I Paid Hitler* (London, 1943). Henry Ashby Turner, Jr., has pointed out in a paper in *Vierteljahrsheft für Zeitgeschichte* (No. 3, 1971) that the luckless Thyssen never even saw eight of the book's nineteen chapters, while the rest were drafted in French! The list of such spurious volumes is endless. The anonymous 'memoirs' of the late Christa Schroeder, *Hitler Privat* (Düsseldorf, 1949), were penned by Albert Zoller, a French army liaison officer to the U.S. Seventh Army. Martin Bormann's alleged notes on Hitler's final bunker conversations, published with an introduction by Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper in 1961 as *The Testament of Adolf Hitler* and – regrettably – published by Albrecht Knaus Verlag in German as *Hitlers Politisches Testament: Die Bormann-Diktate* (Hamburg, 1981), are in my view quite spurious: a copy of the partly typed, partly handwritten original is in my possession, and this leaves no doubt.

Historians are however quite incorrigible, and will quote any apparently primary source no matter how convincingly its false pedigree is exposed. Albert Speer's memoirs *Inside the Third Reich* made him a personal fortune after the West Berlin firm of Propyläen published the book in 1969. The volume earned him wide respect for his disavowal of Hitler. Some critics were however puzzled that the American edition differed substantially from the German original *Erinnerungen* and the British edition. I learned the truth from the horse's mouth, being one of the first writers to interview Speer after his release from Spandau prison in 1966. The former Reichsminister spent an afternoon reading out loud to me from his draft memoirs. The book subsequently published was very different, having been written, he explained, by my own in house editor at the Ullstein publishing house (Annette Engel née Etienne), by their chief editor Wolf Jobst Siedler, and by historian Joachim Fest, editor of the prestigious *Frankfurter Allgemeine*

Zeitung. Miss Etienne confirmed this. When I challenged Speer in private at a Frankfurt publishing dinner in October 1979 to publish his original memoirs, he replied rather wistfully that he wished he could: 'That would be impossible. That manuscript was quite out of keeping with the modern nuances. Even the captions to the chapters would have caused difficulties.' A courageous Berlin author, Matthias Schmidt, later published a book* exposing the Speer legend and the 'memoirs'; but it is the latter volume which the lazy gentlemen of my profession have in their libraries, not Schmidt's, thus proving the opening words of this introduction to be true.

It was symptomatic of Speer's truthfulness to history that while he was in Spandau he paid for the entire wartime diaries of his office (*Dienststelle*) to be retyped omitting the more unfortunate passages, and donated these faked documents to the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz. My comparison of the 1943 volume, housed in the original in British Cabinet Office archives, with the Bundesarchiv copy made this plain, and Matthias Schmidt also reveals the forgery. In fact I have been startled by the number of such 'diaries' which close scrutiny proves to have been faked or tampered with – invariably to Hitler's disadvantage.

Two different men claimed to possess the entire diaries of Vice Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, the legendary Abwehr chief hanged by Hitler in April 1945. The first, Klaus Benzing, produced 'documents of the post-war German Intelligence Service (BND)' and original papers 'signed by Canaris' in his support; the second, the German High Court judge Fabian von Schlabrendorff, announced that his set of the diaries had recently been returned by Generalísimo Francisco Franco to the West German government. Forensic tests on the paper and ink of a 'Canaris document' supplied by the first man, conducted for me by the London laboratory of Hehner & Cox Ltd., proved them to be forgeries. An interview with Franco's *chef de bureau* – his brother in law Don Felipe Polo Valdes – in Madrid disposed of the German judge's equally improbable claim.

Similarly the Eva Braun diaries published by the film actor Luis Trenker were largely forged from the memoirs written decades earlier by Countess Irma Larisch-Wallersee; the forgery was established by the Munich courts in October 1948. Eva Braun's genuine diaries and voluminous intimate correspondence with Hitler were acquired by the CIC team of Colonel Robert A. Gutierrez, based in Stuttgart Backnang in the summer of 1945;

* Matthias Schmidt, *Albert Speer: The End of a Myth* (New York, 1984).

after a brief sifting by Frau Ursula Göhler on their behalf, these papers have not been seen since.

I visited Gutierrez twice in New Mexico – he subsequently released Eva Braun's wedding dress and silver flatware (which he admitted having retained) to my researcher colleague Willi Korte, but he has not conceded an inch over the missing papers and diaries.

The oft quoted diaries of Himmler's and Ribbentrop's Berlin masseur Felix Kersten are equally fictitious – as for example the 'twenty six page medical dossier on Hitler' described in chapter xxiii (pp. 165–171 of the English edition) shows when compared with the genuine diaries of Hitler's doctor, Theo Morell, which I found and published in 1983. The genuine Kersten diaries which Professor Hugh Trevor Roper saw in Sweden were never published, perhaps because of the political dynamite they contained on Sweden's elite including publisher Albert Bonnier, alleged to have offered Himmler the addresses of every Jew in Sweden in return for concessions in the event of a Nazi invasion. Similarly the 'diaries' published by Rudolf Semler in *Goebbels – the Man Next to Hitler* (London, 1947) are phoney too, as the entry for January 12, 1945, proves; it has Hitler as Goebbels's guest in Berlin, when the Führer was in fact still fighting the Battle of the Bulge from his headquarters in western Germany.

There are too obvious anachronisms in Count Galeazzo Ciano's extensively quoted 'diaries': for example Marshal Rodolfo Graziani's 'complaints about Rommel' on December 12, 1940 – two full months *before* Rommel was appointed to Italy's North Africa theatre! In fact Ciano spent the months after his dismissal in February 1943 rewriting and 'improving' the diaries himself, which makes them readable but useless for the purposes of history. Ribbentrop warned about the forgery in his prison memoirs – he claimed to have seen Ciano's real diaries in September 1943 – and the Nazi interpreter Eugen Dollmann described in his memoirs how the fraud was actually admitted to him by a British officer at a prison camp. The OSS files on this are in the Allen W. Dulles papers (unfortunately still closed) at the Mudd Library, Princeton University; but even the most superficial examination of the handwritten original volumes reveals the extent to which Ciano (or others) doctored them and interpolated material – yet historians of the highest repute have quoted them without question as they have Ciano's so called 'Lisbon Papers,' although the latter too bear all the hallmarks of subsequent editing. (They have all been retyped on the same typewriter although ostensibly originating over the six years 1936–42.)

Some diaries have been amended in relatively harmless ways: the Luftwaffe Chief of Staff Karl Koller's real shorthand diary often bears no resemblance to the version he published as *Der letzte Monat* (Mannheim, 1949). And Helmuth Greiner, keeper of the official OKW operations staff war diary until 1943, seized the opportunity in 1945, when asked by the Americans to retranscribe his original notes for the lost volumes from August 1942 to March 1943, to excise passages which reflected unfavourably on fellow prisoners like General Adolf Heusinger – or too favourably on Hitler; and no doubt to curry favour with the Americans, he added lengthy paragraphs charged with pungent criticism of Hitler's conduct of the war which I found to be missing from his original handwritten notes. This tendency – to pillory Hitler after the war – was also strongly evident in the 'diaries' of the late General Gerhard Engel, who served as his army adjutant from March 1938 to October 1943. Historiographical evidence alone – e.g., comparison with the 1940 private diaries of Reichsminister Fritz Todt or the wife of General Rudolf Schmundt, or with the records of Field Marshal von Manstein's Army Group Don at the time of Stalingrad – indicates that whatever they are, they are *not* contemporaneous diaries; tests on the age of the paper confirmed it. Regrettably, the well known Institut für Zeitgeschichte in Munich nonetheless published them in a volume, *Heeresadjutant bei Hitler 1938–1943* (Stuttgart, 1974), rather feebly drawing attention to inconsistencies in the 'diaries' in a short introduction.

With the brilliant exception of Hugh Trevor Roper (now Lord Dacre), whose book *The Last Days of Hitler* was based on the records of the era and is therefore virtually unassailable even today, each successive biographer repeated or embraced the legends created by his predecessors, or at best consulted only the most readily available works of reference themselves. In the 1960s and 1970s a wave of weak, repetitive, and unrevealing Hitler biographies had washed through the bookstores. The most widely publicised was that written by a German television personality and historian, Joachim Fest; but he later told a questioner that he had not even visited the magnificent National Archives in Washington, which houses by far the largest collection of records relating to recent European history. Stylistically, Fest's German was good; but the old legends were trotted out afresh, polished to an impressive gleam of authority.

The same Berlin company also published my Hitler biography shortly after, under the title *Hitler und seine Feldherren;* their chief editor, Siedler, found many of my arguments distasteful, even dangerous, and without

informing me suppressed or even reversed them. In *their* printed text Hitler had not told Himmler (on November 30, 1941) that there was to be 'no liquidation' of a consignment of Jews from Berlin; he had told him not to use the word 'liquidate' publicly in connection with their extermination programme. Thus history is falsified! For this and similar reasons I prohibited further printing of the book, two days after its appearance in Germany, and litigated for ten years to regain the right to publish it in its original form. To explain their actions, the Berlin publishers argued that my manuscript expressed some views that were 'an affront to established historical opinion' in their country.

My idle predecessors had gratefully lamented that most of the documents had been destroyed. They had not – they survived in embarrassing superabundance. The official papers of Luftwaffe Field Marshal Erhard Milch, Göring's deputy, were captured by the British and total over 60,000 pages; the entire war diary of the German naval staff, of immense value far beyond purely naval matters, survived; it took many months to read the 69 volumes of main text, some over 900 pages long, in Washington and to examine the most promising of the 3,800 microfilm records of German naval records held in Washington. After the first edition of this book appeared in Berlin in 1975 further volumes of the diaries of Joseph Goebbels were released in the West; I had some qualms that they might reveal some of my more dangerous hypotheses to have been hollow. (Neither those first volumes, nor the missing Goebbels diaries first exploited by me in the Moscow archives in 1992, nor the rest of them, have yielded any evidence that I was wrong.)

Many sources of prime importance are still missing. That diplomatic historians never once bothered in thirty years to visit the widow of Joachim von Ribbentrop's state-secretary Ernst von Weizsäcker, father of the subsequent West German president, was a baffling mystery to me. Had they looked for the widow of Walther Hewel, Ribbentrop's liaison officer to Hitler, they would have learned about his diaries too. And who are these over-emotional historians of the Jewish tragedy who, until I did so, never troubled themselves even to open a readily available file of the SS chief Heinrich Himmler's own handwritten telephone notes, or to read his memoranda for his secret meetings with Adolf Hitler? Alas, apart from pocket diaries for 1935 and 1939, of which I have donated copies to the Bundesarchiv, the diaries of Himmler have largely vanished – partly carried off as trophies to Moscow, from where most of the pages for 1941–42 have

only recently been retrieved,* and partly removed to Tel Aviv, Israel; Chaim Rosenthal, a former attaché at the Israeli Consulate in New York, obtained some Himmler diaries by the most questionable means and donated them to the University of Tel Aviv in 1982, but following extensive litigation against Rosenthal – now non grata in the U.S.A. – the university returned the volumes to him.

Other diaries are also sorely missed. Those of former Gestapo executive Werner Best were last seen in the Royal Danish Archives in Copenhagen in 1945; those of Karl Wolff were last seen at Nuremberg. The diaries of Hans Lammers, Wilhelm Brückner, and Karl Bodenschatz vanished into American or French hands; those of Professor Theo Morell vanished too, to turn up miraculously in my presence in Washington in 1981 (I published a full edited transcript two years later).

Nicolaus von Below's are probably in Moscow. Alfred Rosenberg's remaining unpublished diaries were illicitly held by the late Dr. Robert M. W. Kempner, an American lawyer based in Frankfurt; his papers, salvaged in Lansdowne, Pennsylvania, are now the object of an unseemly dispute between Jewish archives and his family. The rest of Milch's diaries, of which I obtained and placed on microfilm some five thousand pages in 1967, have vanished, as have General Alfred Jodl's diaries covering the years 1940 to 1943; they were looted along with his private property by the British 11th Armoured Division at Flensburg in May 1945. Only a brief fragment of Benito Mussolini's diary survives: the SS copied the originals and returned them to him in January 1945, but both the originals and the copy placed in Ribbentrop's files are missing now. The important diaries of Rudolf Schmundt were, unhappily, burned at his request by his fellow adjutant Admiral Karl Jesco von Puttkamer in April 1945, along with Puttkamer's own diaries. The Hoover Institution, Stanford, California, holds the diary of SS Obergruppenführer Friedrich Wilhelm Krüger – another item wilfully overlooked by West Germany's historians.

My search for sources that might throw light on Hitler's character was sometimes successful, sometimes not. Weeks of searching with a proton magnetometer – a kind of supersensitive mine detector – in a forest in East Germany failed to unearth a glass jar containing stenograms of Goebbels's very last diaries, although at times, according to the map in my possession,

* *Der Dienstkalender Heinrich Himmlers 1941/42*, ed. Peter Witte, with foreword by Uwe Lohalm and Wolfgang Scheffler (Hamburg, 1999). No praise is too high for this edition.

we must have stood right over it. In writing this biography however I did obtain a significant number of authentic, little known diaries of the people around Hitler, including an unpublished segment of Jodl's diary; the official diary kept for OKW chief Wilhelm Keitel by his adjutant Wolf Eberhard, and Eberhard's own diary for the years 1936 through 1939; the diary of Nikolaus von Vormann, army liaison officer to Hitler during August and September 1939; and the diaries kept by Martin Bormann and by Hitler's personal adjutant Max Wünsche relating to Hitler's movements.

In addition I have used the unpublished diaries of Fedor von Bock, Erhard Milch, Erich von Manstein, Wilhelm Leeb, Erwin Lahousen, and Eduard Wagner – whose widow allowed me to copy some two thousand pages of his private letters. Christa Schroeder, one of Hitler's private secretaries, made available exclusively to me her important contemporary papers. Julius Schaub's family let me copy all his manuscripts about his twenty years as Hitler's senior aide, as did Wilhelm Brückner's son.

I am the first biographer to have used the private papers of Staatssekretär Herbert Backe and his minister, Richard Walter Darré, and the diaries, notebooks, and papers of Fritz Todt. The British government kindly made available to me precious fragments of the diary of Admiral Canaris. Scattered across Germany and America I found the shorthand and typed pages of Erwin Rommel's diaries, and the elusive diaries and notebooks that Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring had kept from his childhood on.

Among the most revealing documents used in this biography are the manuscripts written by Generaloberst (Colonel-General) Werner Freiherr von Fritsch in 1938 and 1939; these I obtained from a Soviet source. Jutta Freifrau von Richthofen allowed me access to the voluminous unpublished diaries of her husband, the late field marshal.

In short, every member of Hitler's staff or High Command whom I located seemed to have carefully hoarded diaries or papers which were eventually produced for my exploitation here. They were mostly in German, but the research papers on the fringe of my work came in a Babel of other languages: Italian, Russian, French, Spanish, Hungarian, Romanian, and Czech. Some cryptic references to Hitler and Ribbentrop in the Hewel diaries defied all my puny code breaking efforts, and then proved to have been written in Indonesian!

All of these records I have now donated to the Institute of Contemporary History in Munich, where they are available as the Author's collection to other writers. Second World War researchers will find microfilms of all the

materials that I collected while researching this and other books available from Microform Academic Publishers Ltd., Main Street, East Ardsley, Wakefield, Yorkshire, WF3 2AT, England (e-mail: info@microform.co.uk; phone +44 1924–825 700, fax 1924–871 005).

OF THE now available collections of records four are worthy of note – the formerly Top Secret CSDIC-series interrogation reports in Class WO208 at the Public Records Office, Kew, London; the coded radio messages of the SS and German police units, intercepted and decoded by the British at Bletchley Park, and now archived in the same place as Classes HW1, HW3, and HW16; the 'Adolf Hitler Collection,' housed in three file boxes at the Seeley G. Mudd Library, Princeton University, New Jersey; and some five hundred pages of Joachim von Ribbentrop's pre ministerial letters and memoranda to Hitler, 1933 – 36, found in the ruins of the Reich chancellery and now in the Louis Lochner papers at the Hoover Institution's archives, Stanford, California.

The 'Hitler Collection' was purloined by Private Eric Hamm of the U.S. Army's war crimes branch from Hitler's residence in Munich, and eventually sold by a Chicago auction house. It reflects Hitler's career well – archive photographs of his sketches and paintings, ambassadors' dispatches, reports on the shooting of 'professional criminals' while 'resisting arrest,' a 1925 hotel registration filled out by Hitler (who entered himself as 'stateless'), documents on the Spanish civil war, Röhm's preparations for the 1923 beer hall putsch, an instruction by Martin Bormann that Hitler had agreed to cover bills run up by the peripatetic Princess Hohenlohe but would pay no more, extensive documentation on the Party's relations with the Church; on December 20, 1940, Pierre Laval wrote to Hitler 'desiring from the bottom of my heart that my country shall not suffer,' and assuring him: 'The policy of collaboration with Germany is supported by the vast majority of the French.' Hjalmar Schacht several times protested to Hitler about the economic damage caused by anti-Jewish strictures; on August 24, 1935, he wrote that Robert Ley's instruction that Woolworth & Co. was not to buy from Jewish suppliers would result in the company's head office cancelling ten million marks of orders from Germany annually: 'It is not clear to me, and never has been, how I am supposed to bring in foreign currency in the face of such policies.' On March 30, 1936, Schacht asked Hitler to receive a certain American silk manufacturer who had been requested by President Roosevelt to 'convey personal greetings to the Führer.'

On June 20, 1938, Count Helldorff, police chief of Berlin, sent to Hitler a report on organised anti Jewish *razzias* in Berlin. Later that year the police sent to Hitler a file on the Jewish assassin Herschel Grynszpan, confirming that his parents had been dumped back over the Polish border at Neu Bentschen on October 29 – a few days before he gunned down a German diplomat in Paris – pursuant to the Reich's drive against Polish Jews who had settled in Germany. In February 1939 Hitler endorsed the refusal of his embassy in Washington to pay Danegeld to Kurt Lüdecke, a former Nazi who had invited the Party publishing house or some other Reich agency to buy up all rights in his scurrilous memoirs to prevent their publication. The same file shows Hitler acting to stop the Nazi heavyweight Max Schmeling staging a return fight against the Negro Joe Louis. ('As you know,' Julius Schaub wrote to the sports minister on March 2, 1939, 'the Führer was against the fight in the first place.')

Most enigmatic of these documents is one evidently originated by the Gestapo after 1940, typed on the special 'Führer typewriter,' reporting ugly rumours about Hitler's ancestry – 'that the Führer was an illegitimate child, adoptive son of Alois, that the Führer's mother's name was Schicklgruber* before the adoption and that the Schicklgruber line has produced a string of idiots.'

Among the latter was a tax official, Joseph Veit, deceased in 1904 in Klagenfurt, Austria. One of his sons had committed suicide, a daughter had died in an asylum, a surviving daughter was half mad, and a third daughter was feebleminded. The Gestapo established that the family of Konrad Pracher of Graz had a dossier of photographs and certificates on all this. Himmler had them seized 'to prevent their misuse.'

The Ribbentrop files reflect his tortuous relations as 'ambassador extraordinary' with Hitler and his rivals. He had established his influence by making good contacts with Englishmen of influence – among them not only industrialists like E. W. D. Tennant and newspaper barons like Lord Rothermere, Lord Astor, and Lord Camrose, but also the Cabinet ministers of the day, including Lord Hailsham, Lord Lloyd, Lord Londonderry, and

* In fact Hitler's *father* was the illegitimate son of Maria Anna Schicklgruber. Nazi newspapers were repeatedly, e.g., on December 16, 1939, forbidden to speculate on his ancestry. Werner Maser states in *Die Frühgeschichte der NSDAP* (Bonn, 1965) that on August 4, 1942, Heinrich Himmler instructed the Gestapo to investigate the Führer's parentage; their bland findings were graded merely *geheim* (secret). The document quoted above is, however, stamped with the highest classification, *Geheime Reichssache*.

young Anthony Eden, in whom Ribbentrop saw the rising star of the Conservative party. The files contain records of Ribbentrop's meetings with Stanley Baldwin and Ramsay MacDonald in 1933 and 1934. They also reflect the tenuous links established between Sir Oswald Mosley and his lieutenants with the Nazi Party leadership in Berlin.

Typical of the many handwritten letters from Ribbentrop to Hitler was one dated January 6, 1935, thanking him for the show of confidence betokened by his new appointment to Reichsleiter – 'Not only does this clearly define my status in the Party, removing any doubts as to your views on me and my activities, but the appointment also gives me a different position vis à vis the foreign ministry both externally and internally.' He signed it 'your trusty Ribbentrop.'

NOTHING CREATED such agony when this biography was first published as my analysis of Hitler's role in the Jewish tragedy. Pure vitriol spilled from the pens of my critics, but I see no reason to revise my central hypothesis, which is based on the *records* of the day: that Hitler grasped quite early on that antisemitism would be a powerful vote catching force in Germany; that he had no compunction against riding that evil steed right up to the portals of the chancellery in 1933; but that once inside and in power, he dismounted and paid only lip service to that part of his Party creed.

The Nazi gangsters under him continued to ride to hounds, however, even when Hitler dictated differently, e.g., in November 1938.

As for the concentration camps he comfortably left that dark side of the Nazi rule to Himmler. He never visited one; those senior officials and foreigners who did obtain privileged access to Dachau, like Ernst Udet or General Erhard Milch or British Members of Parliament in 1933 and 1934 were favourably impressed (but those were early days). Himmler is known to have visited Auschwitz in 1941 and 1942. Hitler never did.

The scale of Germany's Jewish problem is revealed by an unpublished manuscript by Hitler's predecessor as chancellor, Dr. Heinrich Brüning. Writing in American exile in 1943 he stated that after the inflation there was only one major German bank not controlled by Jews, some of them 'utterly corrupt.' In 1931 he had brought the banks under government supervision, and had had to keep the government's findings of dishonesty in the banks secret 'for fear of provoking antisemitic riots.' Brüning blamed foreign correspondents for exaggerating the 'occasional ill treatment of Jews' at the beginning of the Nazi regime:

> In the spring of 1933 foreign correspondents reported that the River Spree [in Berlin] was covered with the corpses of murdered Jews. At that time hardly any Jews except for leaders of the Communist party . . . had been attacked. . . . If,' he pointedly added, 'the Jews had been treated so badly from the beginning of the regime, it could not be explained that so very few of them left the country before 1938.'

In 1948 Brüning would write to the editors of *Life* forbidding them to publish an August 1937 letter he had written to Winston Churchill revealing that 'from October 1928 the two largest regular contributors to the Nazi Party were the general managers of two of the largest Berlin banks, both of Jewish faith, and one of them the leader of Zionism in Germany.'*

I had approached the Nazi maltreatment of the Jews from the traditional viewpoint prevailing in the 1960s. Supposing Hitler was a capable statesman and a gifted commander, the argument ran, how does one explain his 'murder of six million Jews'? If this book were simply a history of the rise and fall of Hitler's Reich it would be legitimate to conclude: 'Hitler killed the Jews.' He after all had created the atmosphere of hatred with his speeches in the 1930s; he and Himmler had created the SS; his speeches, though never explicit, left the clear impression that 'liquidate' was what he meant.

For a full length war biography of Hitler, I felt that a more analytical approach to the key questions was necessary. Remarkably, I found that Hitler's *own* role in the 'Final Solution' had never been examined. German historians, otherwise the epitome of painstaking essaying, had developed monumental blind spots when Hitler himself cropped up: bald statements were made without a shadow of evidence in support. British and American historians willingly conformed. Others quoted them. For thirty years our knowledge of Hitler's part in the atrocity had rested on inter historian incest.

Many people, particularly in Germany and Austria, had an interest in propagating the version that the order of one madman originated the entire tragedy. Precisely when this order was given was, admittedly, left vague.

Every document actually linking Hitler with the treatment of German Jews takes the form of an embargo, from the 1923 beer hall putsch (when

* Brüning's 1943 manuscript is in the Dorothy Thompson collection of the George Arents Research Library, Syracuse University, New York. His letter to Daniel Longwell, editor of *Life*, dated February 7, 1948, is in Longwell's papers in the Butler Library, Columbia University, New York.

he purportedly disciplined a Nazi squad lieutenant for having looted a Jewish delicatessen) right through to 1943 and 1944. In the newly discovered Goebbels diaries we find that Hitler lectured the gauleiters in September 1935 that 'above all' there were to be no excesses against the Jews and no persecution of 'non-Aryans.' Goebbels tried to talk him out of this soft line, but noted: 'Jewish problem not resolved even now. We debated it for a long time but the Führer still can't make his mind up.' And what are we to make of the edict issued 'to all Gau directorates for immediate action' by Hitler's deputy, Rudolf Hess, during the Night of Broken Glass in November 1938, ordering an immediate stop to arson attacks on Jewish premises 'on orders from the very highest level'? Every other historian has shut his eyes and hoped that this horrid, inconvenient document would somehow go away.

It has been joined by others, like the extraordinary note dictated by Staatssekretär Franz Schlegelberger in the Reich Ministry of Justice in the spring of 1942: 'Reich Minister Lammers,' this states, 'informed me that the Führer has repeatedly pronounced that he wants the solution of the Jewish Question put off until after the war is over.' Whatever way one reads this document, it is incompatible with the notion that Hitler had ordered an urgent liquidation programme. (The document's original is in justice ministry file R22/52 in the archives at Koblenz.) Göring himself is on record as stressing at a Berlin conference on July 6, 1942, how much Hitler deprecated the harassment of Jewish scientists, for example:

> I have discussed this with the Führer himself now; we have been able to use one Jew two years longer in Vienna, and another in photographic research, because they have certain things that we need and that can be of the utmost benefit to us at the present.
>
> It would be utter madness for us to say now: 'He'll have to go. He was a magnificent researcher, a fantastic brain, but his wife is Jewish, and he can't be allowed to stay at the University,' etc.
>
> The Führer has made similar exceptions in the arts all the way down to operetta level; he is all the more likely to make exceptions where really great projects or researchers are concerned.*

Of course from 1939 on Hitler uttered several harsh statements in public;

* First session of the newly formed Reich Research Council, July 6, 1942; a stenographic record is in the Milch documents, vol. 58, pp. 3640 ff.

but on many occasions in 1942 and 1943 he made – in private – statements which are incompatible with the notion that he knew that an all-out liquidation programme had begun. In October 1943, even as Himmler was disclosing to privileged audiences of SS generals and gauleiters that Europe's Jews had been systematically murdered, Hitler was still forbidding liquidations – e.g., of the Italian Jews in Rome – and ordering their internment instead. (This order his SS also disobeyed.) In July 1944, overriding Himmler's objections, he ordered that Jews be bartered for foreign currency or supplies; there is some evidence that like contemporary terrorists he saw these captives as a potential asset, a means whereby he could blackmail his enemies. Wholly in keeping with his character, when Hitler was confronted with the facts he took no action to rebuke the guilty; he would not dismiss Himmler as Reichsführer SS until the last day of his life. It is plausible to impute to him that not uncommon characteristic of heads of state who are over-reliant on powerful advisers: a conscious desire 'not to know.' The proof of this is however beyond the powers of an historian.

For the want of hard evidence – and in 1977 I offered a thousand pounds to any person who could produce even one wartime document showing explicitly that Hitler knew, for example, of Auschwitz – my critics resorted to arguments ranging from the subtle to the sledgehammer (in one instance, literally). They postulated the existence of Führer orders without the slightest written evidence of their existence. John Toland, Pulitzer prize winning author of a Hitler biography published in the United States, appealed emotionally in *Der Spiegel* for historians to refute my hypothesis, and they tried by fair means and foul. Perplexed by Himmler's handwritten note about a phone conversation with Heydrich from Hitler's bunker on November 30, 1941 – 'Arrest [of] Dr. Jekelius. Alleged son Molotov. Consignment [*Transport*] of Jews from Berlin. No liquidation.' – these wizards of modern history scoffed that probably Molotov's son was believed to be aboard a trainload of Jews from Berlin concealed as 'Dr. Jekelius' and was on no account to be liquidated. In fact Molotov had no son; Dr. Jekelius was probably Erwin Jekelius, the Viennese neurologist involved in the Euthanasia programme;* and the trainload of Jews from Berlin had that morning arrived

* *Cf.* Benno Müller Hill, *Tödliche Wissenschaft. Die Aussonderung von Juden, Zigeunern und Geisteskranken 1933 – 45* (Rowohlt, Hamburg), p. 107. The editors of *Der Dienstkalender Heinrich Himmlers, 1941/42* (Christians Verlag, Hamburg, 1999), p. 207, have belatedly come to the same conclusion. – We reproduce relevant documents on page 455.

at Riga and had already been liquidated by the local SS commander by the time that Himmler scribbled down what seems clearly to have been Hitler's injunction.* Why else communicate by telephone with Heydrich 'from the bunker' at the Wolf's Lair unless Hitler himself was behind it?

So far the conformist historians have been unable to help Mr. Toland, apart from suggesting that the project was so secret that only oral orders were issued. Why however should Hitler have become so squeamish in this instance, while he had shown no compunction about signing a blanket order for the liquidation of tens of thousands of fellow Germans (Philipp Bouhler's T-4 euthanasia programme); his insistence on the execution of hostages on a one hundred to one basis, his orders for the liquidation of enemy prisoners (the Commando Order), of Allied airmen (the Lynch Order), and Russian functionaries (the Commissar Order) are documented all the way from the Führer's headquarters right down the line to the executioners.

Most of my critics relied on weak and unprofessional evidence. For example, they offered alternative and often specious translations of words in Hitler's speeches (apparently the Final Solution was too secret for him to sign an order, but simultaneously not so secret that he could not brag about it in public speeches); and quotations from isolated documents that have however long been discarded by serious historians as worthless or fakes, like the Gerstein Report† or the 'Bunker conversations' mentioned earlier.

Of explicit, written, wartime evidence, the kind of evidence that could hang a man, they have produced not one line. Thus, in his otherwise fastidious

* See page 455. The most spine chilling account of the plundering and methodical mass murder of these Jews at Riga in November 1941 is in CSDIC (UK) report SRGG.1158 (in file WO.208/4169 of the Public Record Office): the 54-year-old Major General Walther Bruns, an eye-witness, describes it to fellow generals in British captivity in a German prison camp on April 25, 1945, unaware that hidden microphones are recording every word. Of particular significance: his qualms about bringing what he had seen to the Führer's attention, and the latter's orders that such public massacres were to stop forthwith. With HM Stationery Office permission, I shall shortly publish a volume of these extraordinarily revealing CSDIC transcripts.

† On which see the dissertation by Henri Roques: 'Les "confessions" de Kurt Gerstein. Etude comparative des différentes versions,' submitted at the University of Nantes, France, in June 1985. This reveals the extent to which conformist historians had been deceived by the various versions of the 'report.' Such was the outcry aroused that Roques was stripped of his doctoral degree. I have ensured that his 372 page thesis is freely available in the Author's collection at the Institute of Contemporary History, Munich.

analysis of *Hitler and the Final Solution* (London, 1983) Professor Gerald Fleming relied on war crimes trial testimonies, which are anything but safe; reviewing that book, Professor Gordon Craig concluded that even Fleming had failed to refute my hypothesis. Professor Martin Broszat, director of the Institute of Contemporary History in Munich, crudely assailed my biography in a 37 page review in the institute's journal, then refused space for a reply. Unfamiliar with my sources, and unaware that I had in several cases used original files which he and other historians had read only in English translation, he accused me of distorting and even inventing quotations.* Amidst such libels and calumnies, which are easily uttered, Broszat was, however, forced to concede: 'David Irving has perceived one thing correctly when he writes that in his view the killing of the Jews was partly a *Verlegenheitslösung*, "the way out of an awkward dilemma."'

Broszat's corollary, that there was *no* central Hitler Order for what happened, caused an uproar among the world's historians, a *Historikerstreit* which is not politically limited to Left versus Right. My own conclusion went one logical stage further: that in wartime, dictatorships are fundamentally weak – the dictator himself, however alert, is unable to oversee all the functions of his executives acting within the confines of his far flung empire; and in this particular case, I concluded, the burden of guilt for the bloody and mindless massacres of the Jews rests on a large number of Germans (and non Germans), many of them alive today, and not just on one 'mad dictator,' whose order had to be obeyed without question.

I ALSO found it necessary to set very different historical accents on the doctrinaire foreign policies which Hitler enforced – from his apparent unwillingness to humiliate Britain when she lay prostrate in 1940, to his damaging and emotional hatred of the Serbs, his illogical and over loyal admiration of Benito Mussolini, and his irrational mixtures of emotions toward Joseph Stalin.

Being a modern English historian there was a certain morbid fascination

* 'Hitler and the Genesis of the Final Solution, an Assessment of David Irving's Thesis,' *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, No. 25, 1977, pp. 739–75; republished without correction in *Aspects of the Third Reich* (ed. H. W. Koch, Macmillan, New York, 1985) pp. 390–429, and in *Yad Vashem Studies*, No. 13, 1979, pp. 73–125, and yet again, still uncorrected, in *Nach Hitler: der schwierige Umgang mit unserer Geschichte* (Oldenburg, 1988); and extensively quoted by Charles W. Sydnor in 'The Selling of Adolf Hitler,' in *Central European History*, No. 12, 1979, pp. 169–99, 402–5.

for me in inquiring how far Adolf Hitler really was bent on the destruction of Britain and her Empire – a major *raison d'être* for our ruinous fight, which in 1940 imperceptibly replaced the more implausible reason proffered in August 1939, the rescue of Poland from outside oppression. Since in the chapters that follow evidence extracted again and again from the most intimate sources – like Hitler's private conversations with his women secretaries in June 1940 – indicates that he originally had neither the intention nor the desire to harm Britain or destroy the Empire, surely British readers at least must ask themselves: what, then, were we really fighting for? Given that the British people bankrupted themselves (by December 1940) and lost their Empire in defeating Hitler, was the Führer right after all when he noted that Britain's attitude was essentially one of '*Après moi le déluge* – if only we can get rid of the hated National Socialist Germany'?

Unburdened by ideological idealism, the Duke of Windsor suspected in July 1940 that the war was continuing solely in order to allow certain British statesmen (he meant Mr. Churchill and his friends) to save face, even if it meant dragging their country and Empire into financial ruin. Others pragmatically argued that there could be no compromise with Adolf Hitler and the Nazis. Did Britain's leaders in fact believe this, however? Dr. Bernd Martin of Freiburg University has revealed the extent to which secret negotiations on peace continued between Britain and Germany in October 1939 and long after – negotiations on which, curiously, Mr. Churchill's files have officially been sealed until the twenty first century, and the Cabinet records blanked out. Similar negotiations were carried on in June 1940, when even Mr. Churchill showed himself momentarily willing in Cabinet meetings to deal with Hitler if the price was right.

Of course, in assessing the real value of such negotiations and of Hitler's publicly stated intentions it is salutary to know that on June 2, 1941, he admitted to Walther Hewel: 'For myself personally I would never tell a lie; but there is no falsehood I would not perpetrate for Germany's sake!' Nevertheless one wonders how much suffering might have been spared if both sides had pursued the negotiations – might all that happened after 1940, the saturation bombing, the population movements, the epidemics, even the Holocaust itself, have been avoided? Great are the questions, yet modern historiography has chosen to ignore the possibility, calling it heresy.

The facts revealed here concerning Hitler's recorded actions, motivations, and opinions should provide a basis for fresh debate. Americans will find much that is new about the months leading up to Pearl Harbor. The French

will find additional evidence that Hitler's treatment of their defeated nation was more influenced by memories of France's treatment of Germany after World War I than by his respect for Mussolini's desires. Russians can try to visualise the prospect that could conceivably have unfolded if Stalin had accepted Hitler's offer in November 1940 of inclusion in the Axis Pact; or if, having achieved his 'second Brest Litovsk' peace treaty (as momentarily proposed on June 28, 1941), Stalin had accepted Hitler's condition that he rebuild Soviet military power only beyond the Urals; or if Hitler had taken seriously Stalin's alleged peace offer of September 1944.

What is the result of these twenty years' toiling in the archives? Hitler will remain an enigma, however hard we burrow. Even his intimates realised that they hardly knew him. I have already quoted Ribbentrop's puzzlement; but General Alfred Jodl, his closest strategic adviser, also wrote in his Nuremberg cell on March 10, 1946:

> Then however I ask myself, did you ever really know this man at whose side you led such a thorny and ascetic existence? Did he perhaps just trifle with your idealism too, abusing it for dark purposes which he kept hidden deep within himself? Dare you claim to know a man, if he has not opened up the deepest recesses of his heart to you – in sorrow as well as in ecstasy? To this very day I do not know what he thought or knew or really wanted. I only knew my own thoughts and suspicions. And if, now that the shrouds fall away from a sculpture we fondly hoped would be a work of art, only to reveal nothing but a degenerate gargoyle – then let future historians argue among themselves whether it was like that from the start, or changed with circumstances.
>
> I keep making the same mistake: I blame his humble origins. Then however I remember how many peasants' sons have been blessed by History with the name, The Great.

'Hitler the Great'? No, contemporary History is unlikely to swallow such an epithet. From the first day that he 'seized power,' January 30, 1933, Hitler knew that only sudden death awaited him if he failed to restore pride and empire to post Versailles Germany. His close friend and adjutant Julius Schaub recorded Hitler's jubilant boast to his staff on that evening, as the last celebrating guests left the Berlin chancellery building: 'No power on earth will get me out of this building alive!'

History saw this prophecy fulfilled, as the handful of remaining Nazi

Party faithfuls trooped uneasily into his underground study on April 30, 1945, surveyed his still warm remains – slouched on a couch, with blood trickling from the sagging lower jaw, and a gunshot wound in the right temple – and sniffed the bitter almonds smell hanging in the air.

Wrapped in a grey army blanket, he was carried up to the shell blasted chancellery garden. Gasoline was slopped over him in a reeking crater and ignited while his staff hurriedly saluted and backed down into the shelter. Thus ended the six years of Hitler's War.

We shall now see how they began.

DAVID IRVING
London, January 1976 and January 1989

A Note on the Millennium Edition

THE MILLENNIUM edition of *Hitler's War* brings the narrative up to date with the latest documents discovered, primarily in American and former Soviet archives, since the 1991 edition was published. I was in 1992 the first author permitted by the Moscow authorities to exploit the microfiched diaries of Dr. Joseph Goebbels, which contain further vital information about Hitler's role in the Röhm Purge, the Kristallnacht of 1938, the Final Solution, and other matters of high historical importance. From a Californian source I obtained the original Gestapo interrogations of Rudolf Hess's staff, conducted in the first few days after his flight to Scotland. The British secret service has now released to the public domain the intercepts of top secret messages sent in code by Himmler and other SS commanders.

These are just a few examples of the new materials woven into the fabric of this story. I am glad to say I have not had to revise my views as originally expressed: I was always confident that if one adheres to original documents, one will not stray far from Real History. The new archival material has however made it possible to refine the narrative, and to upgrade the documentary basis of my former assertions.

DAVID IRVING
London, January 12, 2002

Prologue: The Nugget

How can we ever learn what Hitler's real ambitions were? One of the men closest to him, who served him as air force adjutant from 1937 to the very end, has emphasised that even when we read of some startling outburst from Hitler to his henchmen, and we feel we are getting closer to the truth, we must always ask ourselves: was that the real Hitler, or was even that just an image that he wished to impose on that particular audience of the moment? Was he just seeking to jolt his complacent satraps out of a dangerous lethargy? So we must go prospecting deep down into the bedrock of history before we can locate the black nugget of ambition of which the last six years of his life were just the violent expression.

Excellent sources survive, even before *Mein Kampf*. The confidential police reports on twenty of Hitler's early speeches, delivered in smoky, crowded halls in the revolutionary Soviet Munich of 1919 and 1920, provide a series of glimpses at the outer shell of his beliefs. Here Adolf Hitler, just turned thirty years of age, expressed no grand geopolitical ideas. His agitation pivoted on the terms dictated to Berlin's 'craven and corrupt' representatives at Versailles; he tried to convince his audience that defeat in the World War had been inflicted on them not by their enemies abroad, but by the revolutionaries within – the Jew-ridden politicians in Berlin.

Stripped of their demagogic element, the speeches are significant only for Hitler's ceaseless reiteration that a Germany disarmed was prey to the lawless demands of her predatory neighbours. He demanded that Germany become a nation without class differences, in which manual labourer and intellectual each respected the contribution of the other. On one occasion, in April 1920, he even proclaimed, 'We need a dictator who is a genius, if we are to arise again.'

His targets were not modest even then: he was going to restore the German Reich, extending from Memel in the east to Strasbourg in the west, and from Königsberg to Bratislava. In another secret speech, delivered to an audience in Salzburg – evidently on August 7 or 8, 1920 – Hitler roused his Austrian compatriots with the same two ideals: 'Firstly, *Deutschland über alles in der Welt*. And secondly, our German domain extends as far as the German tongue is spoken.'

This Salzburg speech, of which only one faded, fragile, and hitherto unpublished shorthand transcript has survived, comes closest to revealing his early mind and attitudes:

> This is the first demand that we must raise and do raise: that our people be set free, that these chains be burst asunder, and that Germany be once again captain of her soul and master of her destinies, together with all those who want to join Germany. (*Applause*).
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> The fulfilment of this first demand will then open up the way for all the other reforms.
>
> And here is one thing that perhaps distinguishes us from you as far as our program is concerned, although it is very much in the spirit of things: our attitude to the Jewish problem.
>
> For us, this is not a problem we can turn a blind eye to – one to be solved by small concessions. For us, it is a problem of whether our nation can ever recover its health, whether the Jewish spirit can ever really be eradicated. Don't be misled into thinking you can fight a disease without killing the carrier, without destroying the bacillus. Don't think you can fight racial tuberculosis without taking care to rid the nation of the carrier of that racial tuberculosis. This Jewish contamination will not subside, this poisoning of the nation will not end, until the carrier himself, the Jew, has been banished from our midst. (*Applause*).

Oratory like that went down well. Hitler however soon found that it was not the language that the mobs wanted to hear. He called for the hanging of war profiteers, and he identified them as Jews. On August 13, 1920, the police reports show, he devoted a speech for the first time solely to the Jews. He accused them of responsibility for the war and of profiteering. The Nazi Party, he declared, must open a crusade against the Jews. 'We do not want to whip up a pogrom atmosphere,' he warned. 'We must however be fired with a remorseless determination to grasp this evil at its roots and to

exterminate it, root and branch.' A few weeks later he stated explicitly, 'We cannot skirt around the Jewish problem. It has got to be solved.'

BETWEEN 1920 and his seizure of power in 1933, the events need only be sketched in. It will be useful to reproduce here, however, part of a hitherto unpublished record of a secret meeting between Hitler and two of his Party's financial backers, Prince Wrede and Consul General Scharrer, in the plush Regina Palace hotel in Munich, on December 21, 1922. The latter brought a stenographer with him, who took a note of Hitler's remarks as he mapped out his political views and intentions, which were often expressed with a startling frankness.

'I know for a fact that if Bolshevism got the upper hand in Germany,' he said, 'I should either be hanging from the nearest lamppost or locked up in some cellar or other. So the question for me is not whether or not I want to undertake this or that, but whether or not we succeed in preventing a Bolshevik take-over. I myself have the blind faith that our movement will win through. We began three and a half years ago with six men,' he said. 'Today I can say with confidence that our cause will prevail.'

By their recent prohibitions against the Nazi Party, he continued, the different provincial governments had only helped further the spread of his movement, far beyond the borders of Bavaria.

The Communists were, however, digging in around Hamburg, in northern Germany. 'I do not believe,' he admitted, 'that we shall be able to put together anything significant in the north in time, before the catastrophe occurs. If some incident should now trigger the major conflict, then we shall lose the north, it will be beyond salvation. The most we shall be able to do from down here is to organise a counterstroke. All talk about nationalist organisations in the north is pure bluff. . . They have no suitably forceful personality. The cities which ought to be the centres of organisation are in the hands of our political enemies.'

After examining the feebleness of the Soldiers' Councils ('I am convinced that Bolshevism in Munich is an Utopia,' he said), Hitler continued: 'There is no reason for us to resort to force in Bavaria, as our strength is growing from day to day anyway. Every week sees an increment of one or two *Hundertschaften* [brigades of Nazi stormtroopers], and an increase of several thousand members. So long as our strength is growing we shall have no cause to opt for the path of violence.' He would resort to force, he said confidentially, only if he felt that the Party could expand no further and

that 'we shall have nothing further to gain by holding back.' He hoped that when that time came the Bavarian army would supply him with the weapons. 'I have seventeen Hundertschaften,' he bragged. 'With the help of these I can sweep anything off the streets that I don't like the look of.' He reminded his two wealthy listeners of how, with only 1,800 Fascists, Mussolini had smashed the Italian general strike. 'If I throw in these men of mine, as a dynamic and coherent force, at the critical moment, there is nothing I won't be able to suppress.'

Hitler then set out how he envisaged the new German state developing: 'First there will be civil war, with a lengthy struggle for power. The European countries that have an interest in Germany's rebirth will back us – above all Britain. France, on the other hand, will be on the side of the Bolsheviks, as she has the greatest interest in keeping Germany destabilised as long as possible so as to have a free hand for herself in the Rhineland and the Ruhr.'

Hitler expected Britain to back a future German government – provided it generated the requisite impression of reliability – because Germany's destruction would lead to a French hegemony in Europe, and Britain would find herself relegated to the position of a 'third-rate world power.'

He expected Italy to share the British – and American – interest in stopping the spread of Bolshevism. 'We have to keep Italy's interest in this alive, and we must not put her nose out of joint by making propaganda for our union [*Zusammenschluß*] with German-speaking Austria, or the regaining of the [Italian] South Tyrol. I have not,' Hitler emphasised, developing this theme, 'the slightest time for those who want our foreign policy shackled to the liberation of the South Tyrol. . . We should find ourselves on bad terms with Italy; and remember, if fighting began [with France] we should not get any coal and raw materials by any other route than via Italy. I have not the slightest intention of shedding German blood for the South Tyrol. We shall have no trouble persuading Germans to fight on the Rhine, but never for Merano or Bolzano. . . For the time being,' he stressed, 'there must be no collision with the Latin peoples.'

And then he said: 'I believe that we shall be on the march against France before two or three decades are out.'

His remarks about Britain were characterised by benevolence, but he did not expect her to permit Germany to rise above second place.

'However well inclined Britain may be toward us she will never again allow us to become a great power – not now that she has had a taste of our

talents, that is of our scientific prowess before the World War [1914–18] and of our military prowess during it.

> . . . As soon as stability has returned to Germany, more or less, we shall have to undo all the damage that has been done. We can pursue either a global strategy [*Weltpolitik*] or a Continental strategy. A prerequisite for a global strategy is a broad base here on the Continent. If we go for a global strategy, then we shall always collide with Britain.
>
> We could have pursued a global strategy before the World War but then we should have struck an alliance with Russia. If however Britain had ended up in ruins Germany would not have profited thereby: Russia would have gained India...' Therefore, Hitler concluded, 'It will probably be better to adopt a Continental strategy. We should have allied ourselves in '99 with Britain. Then we could have defeated Russia and had a free hand against France. With Germany master in her own house on the Continent, things would never have come to a war with Britain.'

Turning to the Soviet Union, he addressed these remarkable words to his privileged little audience: 'The present national [Bolshevik] government in Russia is a danger to us. As soon as the Russians can, they slit the throats of those who have helped them to attain power. That's why it will be vital to splinter the Russian empire and to divide up her territories and soil, to be settled by German settlers and tilled by the German plough. Then ... if we were on good terms with Britain we could solve the French problem without interference from Britain.'

Without using the word itself as yet, he addressed the question of Germany's *Lebensraum:* 'First,' he said, 'we must see to it that we get elbow room – that is our top priority. . . Only then can our government again begin working in the national interest toward a nationalist war. This would certainly be brought to a victorious conclusion. We can take steps to see that the necessary secrets are kept. Before the World War the secrets of things like the 42-centimetre mortar and the flame-thrower were rigorously kept.' While he believed the British to be too 'canny' to guarantee Germany outright, he expected their support in the long run against France, provided each country defined its mutual interests.

Addressing the growing financial crisis in Germany, Hitler told the prince and the consul general: 'I believe that the Reichsmark's decline in value will be halted on the day they stop printing money. The government however

just keeps printing masses of fresh paper money to camouflage its own bankruptcy. . . Everywhere in government agencies where there used to be just one man there are now three or four. That's got to stop. Only a brutal government can make any headway against this paradise for parasites and hangers-on – a dictator to whom personal popularity means nothing.' Germany needed a new Bismarck, said Hitler.

He himself would make short shrift of his enemies if he came to power: 'The dictator can reckon with a general strike the moment he makes his appearance,' he explained. 'This general strike will give him the ideal opportunity to purge the government agencies. Anybody who refuses to work on the terms that the dictator lays down finds himself fired. Only the best men get hired. The men who got into the government agencies because of the party they belonged to will be out on their ears.' He repeated that he believed that the German people needed 'a monarch-like idol' – but not some mild-mannered king, so much as a 'full-blooded and ruthless ruler,' a dictator who would rule with an iron hand, like Oliver Cromwell. There was no such man among their present Royal pretenders. 'When, after years of this iron rule, the people yearn for moderate leadership – then is the time for a mild and benevolent monarch whom they can idolise. It is something like training a dog: first it is given to a tough handler, and then, when it has been put through the hoops, it is turned over to a friendly owner whom it will serve with all the greater loyalty and devotion.'

Thus spoke Adolf Hitler, aged thirty-three, in December 1922. Touching upon religion, he said simply that Christianity was the only possible ethical foundation for Germany, and that religious strife was the worst misfortune that could befall her. On the law, he said: 'I consider the properly sworn professional judge to be the only acceptable arbiter for a legal system' – he opposed lay courts and judges of any hue.

The Jewish Question obviously preoccupied him, as he dwelt on this lastly and at length in this remarkable discourse. He admired Frederick the Great's solution: 'He eliminated [*ausgeschaltet*] the Jews from anywhere they were bound to have a noxious effect, but continued to employ them where use could be made of them. In our political life,' Hitler continued, 'the Jews are unquestionably noxious. They are methodically poisoning our people. I always used to regard antisemitism as inhumane, but now my own experiences have converted me into the most fanatical enemy of Judaism: apropos of which, I combat Jewry not as a religion, but as a race.' He described the Jews as born destroyers, not rulers at all; they had neither culture, nor art,

nor architecture of their own, 'the surest expression of a people's culture.' 'Peoples have a soul,' said Hitler, 'while the Jews have none. They are just calculators. That explains why only Jews could have founded Marxism, which negates and destroys the very basis of all culture. With their Marxism, the Jews hoped to create a broad mindless mass of plebs without any real intelligence, a gormless instrument in their hands.'

Was Germany, he asked, obliged to bear the Jewish yoke any longer? 'The lion is a predatory animal,' he said by way of answer. 'It can't help it – it's in its nature. Man is not bound however to let himself be mauled by the lion. He must save his skin as best he can, even if the lion comes to harm. A solution of the Jewish problem must be arrived at. If the problem can be solved by common sense, then so much the better all around. If not, then there are two possibilities – either a bloody conflict, or an Armenianization.' (Was Hitler referring to the secret liquidation of 1,500,000 Armenians by the Turks at the beginning of the century? He was maddeningly vague.) 'Tactically and politically,' he explained, 'I adopt the standpoint that I have to instil in my people the conviction that those who are against us are our mortal enemies.' A few weeks later, on February 23, 1923, the Munich branch of the Nazi Party received a one-million-Reichsmark donation from Consul General Scharrer.

A FEW months after that, in November 1923, Hitler launched an abortive revolution in Munich; he was tried, imprisoned in Landsberg fortress, and eventually released. He published *Mein Kampf* and rebuilt the Party over the next years into a disciplined and authoritarian force with its own Party courts, its brownshirt SA guards and its black-uniformed 'Praetorian Guard,' the SS, until at the head of a swollen army of a million Party members he arrived at the chancellery in Berlin in January 1933. It was no mean feat for an unknown, penniless, gas-blinded acting corporal to achieve by no other means than his power of oratory and a driving, dark ambition.

During those years before 1933, Hitler had fashioned his plans into their final form. He had repeated them more coherently in a 1928 manuscript which he never published. Of brutal simplicity, his foreign policies involved enlarging Germany's dominion from her present 216,000 square miles to over half a million, at Russia and Poland's expense. His contemporaries were more modest, desiring only to restore Germany's 1914 frontiers. For Hitler this was the 'dumbest foreign aim imaginable,' it was 'inadequate from the patriotic, and unsatisfactory from the military point of view.' No,

Germany must renounce her obsolete aspirations to overseas colonial markets, and revert instead to 'a clear, unambiguous Raumpolitik.' First Germany must 'create a powerful land force,' so that foreigners would take her seriously. Then, he wrote in 1928, there must be an alliance with Britain and her empire, so that 'together we may dictate the rest of world history.'

His oratory during these years had developed most powerfully. His speeches were long and *ex tempore*, but logical. The suggestive force gripped each man in his audience. As Robespierre once said of Marat, 'The man was dangerous: he believed in what he said.'

Hitler's power after 1933 would be founded, as David Lloyd George wrote in 1936, on having kept his promises. In office, he would abolish the class war of the nineteenth century, and create a Germany of equal opportunity for manual and intellectual workers, for rich and poor. 'He doesn't care a straw for the intelligentsia,' Walther Hewel, his Landsberg prison companion, had written on December 14, 1924. 'They always raise a thousand objections to every decision. The intellectuals he needs will come to him of their own accord, and they will become his leaders.' Twenty years later, in a secret speech to his generals on January 27, 1944, Hitler himself outlined the pseudo-Darwinian process he had hit upon to select Germany's new ruling class: he had used the Party itself as a deliberate vehicle for singling out the future leadership material – men of the requisite ruthlessness, whose knees would not fold when the real struggle began.

> I set up my fighting manifesto and tailored it deliberately to attract only the toughest and most determined minority of the German people at first.
>
> When we were quite small and unimportant I often told my followers that if this manifesto is preached year after year, in thousands of speeches across the nation, it is bound to act like a magnet: gradually one steel filing after another will detach itself from the public and cling to this magnet, and then the moment will come where there'll be this minority on the one side and the majority on the other – but this minority will be the one that makes history, because the majority will always follow where there's a tough minority to lead the way.

In power after 1933, Hitler would adopt the same basic methods to restructure the German nation and toughen his eighty million subjects for the coming ordeal. His confidence in them was well-placed: the Germans

were industrious, inventive, and artistic; they had produced great craftsmen, composers, philosophers, and scientists. Hitler once said that their national character had not changed since the Roman historian Tacitus had described the German tribes who had roamed north-west Europe nearly two thousand years before – a 'wild, brave, and generous blue-eyed people.' Hitler asserted that if, nonetheless, history had witnessed the Germans repeatedly engulfed by the tide of human affairs, then it was because their feckless leaders had failed them.

It is hard to define in advance the origins of Hitler's success in strengthening the character of his people. Mussolini never thus succeeded with the Italian people, even in twenty years of Fascist rule. In 1943, the flabby structure of Italian Fascism evaporated after a few air raids and the overthrow of Mussolini. In Germany, however, after ten years of Nazi indoctrination, Hitler's subjects were able to withstand enemy air attacks – in which fifty or a hundred thousand people were killed overnight – with a stoicism that exasperated their enemies. At the end, when Germany was once again defeated, those enemies had to resort to the most draconian punitive methods, of mass trials, confiscation and expropriation, internment and re-education, before the seeds that Hitler had sown could be eradicated.

Adolf Hitler had built the National Socialist movement in Germany not on capricious electoral votes, but on *people*, and they gave him – in the vast majority – their unconditional support to the end.



Daily Express

JUDEA DECLARES WAR ON GERMANY

Jews Of All The World Unite In Action

BOYCOTT OF GERMAN GOODS

An unpromising start: On March 24, 1933 international Jewish organisations proclaim 'war' on Hitler's Germany (AUTHOR'S COLLECTION)

Part I: Approach to Absolute Power

Der Pöbel, pah!
Rienzi ist's, der ihn zu Rittern macht.
Nimm ihm Rienzi, und er ist, was er war.
RICHARD WAGNER'S OPERA *Rienzi*



Hitler, Schaub, and Ernst Röhm at the Hotel Dreesen (AUTHOR'S COLLECTION)

Dictator by Consent

When Hitler became chancellor on January 30, 1933, Germany was an international bankrupt in an insolvent world. There were millions of unemployed. On March 5, 1933, his Party increased its strength in the elections to 288 of the Reichstag's 647 seats. The Communist party was banned – a step which Hitler had advised against in his first Cabinet of January 30, fearing a general strike ('You can't ban six million men') – and he began to enact the laws he had promised, including decrees designed to force the Jews out of Germany's professions, Germany's trades, and eventually Germany.

He had a sounder appreciation of economics than people believed. Count Lutz Schwerin von Krosigk, whom he had inherited as finance minister, wrote privately after the war: 'He dismissed warnings of inflation with the – not altogether accurate – comment that under a strong government inflation was impossible. In which connection he had an absolutely healthy instinct on the necessity of keeping expenditure in line with income.'

Hitler restored national confidence in the future, which was the basis for any economic recovery. There were strict price and wage controls. Meanwhile, Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, the autocratic chairman of the Reichsbank, moved to restore Germany's solvency by introducing strictly bilateral trade agreements, and raising credit for Hitler's ambitious programmes.

Hitler's first power base in 1933 was the labour force. Among the papers of Walther Hewel – the nineteen-year-old student who had shared his Landsberg imprisonment – is this doctrine written in Hitler's spiky hand:

> They must learn to respect each other and be respected again – the intellectual must respect the manual labourer and vice versa. Neither can exist without the other.

From them both will emerge the new man: the man of the coming German Reich!

Adolf Hitler, Landsberg, 18 December 1924 (Fortress Arrest)

After 1933 the workers were no longer social outcasts. All the cancerous symptoms of industrial unrest – strikes, lockouts, absenteeism – became phantoms of the past. As Hitler's brief successor, Karl Dönitz, was to put it in 1945: 'What did the workers care about the Jewish problem and all that? At last they had food and work again, and they were respected human beings.'

In April 1933 Hitler closed down the trade unions; he transferred their staff, members, and assets one year later to a monolithic German Labour Front, the DAF. It was the biggest trade union in the world, and one of the most successful. Dr. Robert Ley, the stuttering, thickset Party official who controlled the DAF for the next twelve years, certainly deserves a better appraisal from history. The DAF regularly received 95 percent of the subscriptions due – an unparalleled expression of the thirty million members' confidence. With this vast wealth the DAF built for them holiday cruise liners, housing, shops, hotels, and convalescent homes; it financed the Volkswagen factory, the Vulkan shipyards, production centres in the food industry, and the Bank of German Labour. Hitler respected Ley's ability, and was willingly photographed in the company of Ley's beautiful ash-blonde first wife. Labour leader Ley was to stand by Hitler beyond the end.

DURING THE months in Landsberg prison Hitler had mentioned one particular ambition, the construction of a network of superhighways. Schwerin von Krosigk would write:

> Hitler used to describe how the city folk returned from their Sunday outings in overflowing trains, getting their buttons torn off, their hats crushed, their good mood ruined and every benefit of the relaxation wasted; how different it would be if the city workers could afford their own cars to go on real Sunday outings without all that. . . Road-building has always been the sign of powerful governments, he said, from the Romans and the Incas down to Napoleon.

Only twelve days after the seizure of power in 1933, Hitler announced the autobahn construction programme; on June 28 the Cabinet passed the

law, and a few days later he sent for Dr. Fritz Todt, an engineer who had written a 48-page study of the problems of road-building in 1932, and asked him if he would like the job of Inspector-General of German Road Construction. He said he had always preferred travel by road to rail, as the contact with the people was closer: 'I must have driven half a million miles in my fourteen years of struggle for power.' Todt accepted the job: the interview lasted barely three minutes. On July 5 Hitler again sent for Todt, strolled for ninety minutes with him, told him what routes the first network would take, laid down the minimum width of the traffic lanes, and sent Todt to begin work at once. (All this emerges from Todt's own private papers.) The military importance of the autobahns has been exaggerated. The German railroad system was of far greater significance. For the present, the autobahns were the means whereby Germany's national unity could be enhanced, because Hitler realised that the fight against provincialism and separatist trends would last for many years yet.

Simultaneously Hitler appointed a Minister of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment, Dr. Joseph Goebbels, an eloquent 35-year-old Rhinelander. To his Cabinet on March 11, 1933, Hitler explained:

> One of the chief jobs of the ministry will be to prepare [the nation] for important government moves. . .The government's measures would not begin until there had been a certain period of public enlightenment.

Hitler saw the random bickering of the newspapers of the democracies as an inexcusable frittering away of a vital national resource. He believed that the press could become a powerful instrument of national policy. The freedom of editors had already been seriously curtailed by emergency laws passed by the pre-Hitler governments of Heinrich Brüning and Franz von Papen. Goebbels surpassed them both however in tackling the dissident voices, cleansing the publishing houses by bringing them into line or simply confiscating them. To establish a virtual Nazi Party press monopoly Hitler used the Franz Eher publishing house, which the party had purchased in 1920. (At that time it had been publishing an insolvent Munich daily, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, with barely 7,000 subscribers; Hitler had appointed Max Amann, his sergeant major in the World War, to manage Eher's in April 1922, and the newspaper's ratings had begun to climb.) Within a year of the seizure of power in 1933 the Nazi Party would control eighty-six newspapers with 3,200,000 readers. Laws were enacted closing down 120 socialist

and Communist printing plants, and these were sold off to the Party at knockdown prices. Max Amann soon controlled an empire of seven hundred newspapers.

Jews and Marxists were forbidden in any case to practise journalism. From mid-1935 the Catholic-owned press was also purged of divisive trends. As Goebbels emphasised: 'I reject the standpoint that there is in Germany a Catholic and a Protestant press; or a workers' press; or a farmers' press; or a city press or a proletariat press. There exists only a *German* press.'

AT THE same time Hitler established his police state. Control of the Reich's police authorities passed progressively into the hands of Heinrich Himmler, Reichsführer of the SS. Himmler had initially controlled the police force in Munich after Hitler came to power; by 1935 he would control all Reich police forces. Hitler readily accepted that Himmler's 'concentration camps' were indispensable for the political re-education of the dissident – and indeed the dissolute as well, because by 1935 the camps would contain more than one hapless inmate whom Hitler had incarcerated as a drastic cure for some unsavoury human failing. ('The punishment was not ordered by the Führer to hurt you,' Himmler wrote to one alcoholic confined in Dachau on May 18, 1937, 'but to retrieve you from a path that has clearly led you and your family to ruin.')

Chief of the security police was one Reinhard Heydrich. In March 1933 Himmler had appointed him, then twenty-nine, to head the political section at Munich police HQ. A tall, blond officer with aquiline features, Heydrich – renowned in later years for his cold-bloodedness – must have had some humour in his dusky soul, because in 1939 he dared write to the Reichsführer SS that a witch had been identified amongst Himmler's ancestors, and duly burned at the stake in 1629.

On the nature of Hitler's contacts with Himmler there is little that can be said with certainty. In pedantic, spiky handwriting Himmler listed the topics he intended to discuss with the Führer, and he sometimes added Hitler's decisions on each case. The gaps that these notes reveal are so astounding that we must assume that Himmler kept Hitler in the dark about whole areas of his nefarious activities.

ONE OF the most important surveillance weapons in Hitler's police state was controlled by Hermann Göring, not Himmler. This was the Forschungsamt, or 'Research Office,' set up in April 1933 with a monopoly of

wiretapping operations. The FA was a high-grade source of police, economic, and political Intelligence. Printed on the characteristic brown paper that gave them their famous name – the 'Brown Pages' – the wiretaps were distributed to Hitler's ministers in locked dispatch boxes or by pneumatic post on the strictest 'need-to-know' basis.

Unhappily, the entire FA archives were destroyed in 1945. The scattered items that have survived demonstrate its sinister efficiency, putting routine wiretaps on the fringe actors of the coming chapters like Gauleiter Julius Streicher, Miss Unity Mitford, Princess Stephanie Hohenlohe, Goebbels's mistresses, and even Hitler's adjutant Fritz Wiedemann. The first reference to its work was at a Cabinet meeting of March 29, 1933, when Hitler was told of exaggerated reports being filed on anti-Jewish atrocities in Germany. 'The atrocity reports were principally cabled to America by the Hearst Press representative here, Deuss. This has been established beyond doubt by tapping his telephone conversations.' (Hitler agreed that Deuss should be deported.) German opposition elements were also wiretapped. One Brown Page related a phone call by the wife of General Kurt von Schleicher to a woman friend, with a riddle: 'What is it? – Without an *i*, nobody wants to be it; with an *i*, everybody.' The answer was *arisch*, Aryan. (*Arsch* is not a word of great endearment).

HITLER PRUDENTLY cultivated Germany's venerable president, Field Marshal von Hindenburg. Hindenburg was Supreme Commander, and he could also block any of Hitler's proposals. Hitler wooed him by appointing Dr. Hans Lammers, an expert on constitutional law, as Head of the Reich chancellery. Hitler also undertook to retain Dr. Otto Meissner as Chief of the President's chancellery, and Franz Seldte as Minister of Labour – promises that he honoured until his death twelve years later.

Hitler also worked hard to win over the Reichswehr, the armed forces. Germany was permitted only a hundred-thousand-man army – numerically smaller than most comparable countries' fire brigades (Italy by comparison had 600,000 soldiers). The Versailles treaty forbade Germany to manufacture heavy artillery, military aircraft, tanks, or anti-aircraft guns; her navy was quiescent; she had no air force. Even prior to 1933, Hitler had approached the Reichswehr with all the blandishments and posturing of a statesman courting a neighbouring power that he needed as an ally. These early contacts with the Reichswehr had however disappointed him. He had revered the retired General Hans von Seeckt until in November 1932 he

met him privately in Göring's Berlin apartment. Here Seeckt described his own close relations with the German People's Party. Hitler abruptly stood up and interrupted: 'Herr Generaloberst! I had thought I was speaking with one of our great army commanders from the World War. That you are flirting with a political party has astonished me. That will be all.'

Relations with the current Commander in Chief of the army, the foppish General Kurt von Hammerstein-Equord, were equally cool. He once drawled to Hitler, 'Herr Hitler, if you come to power legally, all well and good. If you do not, I shall open fire.' However, the new war minister whom Hindenburg had appointed, General Werner von Blomberg, had commanded the enclave of East Prussia, and he had come to respect the Nazi Party organisation there as a welcome supplement to that exposed province's defences against the constant threat of Polish attack. He declared his unconditional loyalty to Hitler. His chief of staff, Reichenau, had also come from East Prussia and was by no means deaf to the Nazi ideology.

With all the generals Hitler had one powerful argument. He was going to restore to Germany her striking power, regardless of the restrictions of Versailles. Very shortly after 'seizing power' he had asked to meet the generals, and had borrowed Hammerstein's official apartment at No. 14 Bendler Strasse for the reception. It was February 3, 1933. Arriving with Lammers and Wilhelm Brückner, his own towering adjutant in SA uniform, Hitler was nervous and showed it throughout the dinner party; he then tapped his glass for silence and delivered a speech of which Hammerstein's adjutant, Major Horst von Mellenthin, took a detailed note. This reads in part:

> There are two possible ways of overcoming our desperate situation: firstly, seizing by force new markets for our production; secondly, obtaining new Lebensraum for our population surplus.* A peace-loving public will not stomach objectives like these. It will have to be prepared for them.
>
> Germany must recapture complete freedom of decision. This will not be feasible unless we first win political power. This is why my aim is to restore our political strength first. My [Nazi Party] organisation is necessary to get our citizens back into shape. Democracy is an Utopia. It is impossible. You won't find it in either industry or the armed forces, so

* Another general present, Curt Liebmann, noted his words thus: 'We might fight for new export markets; or we might – and this would be better – conquer new Lebensraum in the east, and Germanise it ruthlessly.'

it's not likely to be of much use in such a complicated institution as a state. Democracy is the worst of all possible evils. Only one man can and should give the orders. This is the ideal I've been working toward since 1918, and when I think that my Movement – which has swollen from seven men to twelve millions – has raised me aloft from simple soldier to Reich Chancellor, it seems to show that there's still a large part of the public waiting to be won over to this ideal.

The public has got to learn to think as a nation. This will weld it together. This cannot be done by persuasion alone, but only by force. Those who won't agree must get their arms twisted. Our supreme commandment is to maintain our unity.

This process is today well under way. This is why I built up my organisation and dedicated it to the state. Our target is the restoration of German might. That's what I'm fighting for with every means. To restore our might we'll need the Wehrmacht, the armed forces. . .

What matters above all is our defence policy, as one thing's certain: that our last battles will have to be fought by force. The [Nazi Party] organisation was not created by me to bear arms, but for the moral education of the individual; this I achieve by combating Marxism.... My organisation will solely confine itself to the ideological education of the masses, in order to satisfy the army's domestic and foreign-policy needs. I am committed to the introduction of conscription [*forbidden by the Versailles treaty*].

This path I have set out to you will take many years to tread. If France has real statesmen, she will set about us during the preparatory period – not herself, but probably using her vassals in the east. So it will be wrong to commit ourselves too much to the idea of equal armaments. We must make all our economic and military preparations in secret, and only come out into the open when they are 100 percent complete. Then we will have regained the freedom of decision. . .

Then we must decide: foreign markets, or colonies? I'm for colonies. . . One day the time will come when we can raise a mighty army (and let me emphasise that I will never use the armed forces to fight an internal enemy: I have other means of doing that.*)

* The SS. At his Cabinet meeting on January 30, 1933, Hitler ruled that even if the Communists called a general strike he would not permit the armed forces to put it down.

> So I ask you to understand my aims and accept my political aid. With my Movement, a miracle has happened for the Fatherland. This miracle will not recur however, so we must use it.

He could hardly have made himself clearer. Even so, his audience was unimpressed. Someone muttered, 'Is that man supposed to be the Führer of the German people?' By then however Hitler's revolution was only four days old, and they all had much to learn.

Four days later the Cabinet discussed various ways of reducing unemployment. Hitler stated: 'Every publicly supported project for creating employment must be judged by one criterion alone: is it or is it not requisite for the restoration of the German nation's fighting capability?' He laid down that for the next five years, until 1938, there would be only one guiding aim: 'Everything for the Wehrmacht.'

A few days later, Hitler forced through Göring's big 'civil aviation' budget. The Cabinet record related: 'The Reich Chancellor [Hitler] explained that . . . it is a matter of providing the German nation in camouflaged form with a new air force, which is at present forbidden under the terms of the Versailles treaty.'

Hitler told Blomberg that the embryo panzer and Luftwaffe troops would be favoured as an elite for the next few years. He particularly wanted the Luftwaffe officer corps to be imbued with a 'turbulent spirit of attack.' The initial 'risk Luftwaffe' was to be ready by late 1935.

Of deeper interest are the instructions that Hitler issued to the German navy. The Commander in Chief, Admiral Erich Raeder, was called to a separate briefing by Hitler on his coming to power. The navy had already discussed with Blomberg's predecessor, in November 1932, an extensive naval construction programme. Hitler now instructed Raeder to base his calculations exclusively on the French and Russian navies. Raeder's adjutant, Captain Erich Schulte-Mönting, recalls:

> Hitler told Raeder it would be the tentpole of his future foreign policy to coexist peacefully with Britain, and he proposed to give practical expression to this by trying to sign a Naval Agreement with her.
>
> He would like to keep the German navy relatively small, as he wanted to recognise Britain's right to naval supremacy on account of her status as a world power. He proposed to recommend the balance of forces accordingly.

Before their eyes, the Germans now saw Hitler's promises coming true. On September 23, 1933, he ceremonially turned the first spit of excavations for Fritz Todt's autobahn network at Frankfurt – a city where eight thousand men were unemployed in 1932. At seven a.m. the first seven hundred men marched out across the River Main to the sound of bands playing. At ten a.m. Hitler spoke to them: 'I know that this festive day will soon be over – that times will come when rain or frost or snow embitters you and makes the work much harder. Nobody will help us however if we don't help ourselves.' After he had gone, the workers stormed the little heap of earth that he had shovelled, to take home souvenirs. Such was the almost religious fervour that Hitler generated. Todt wrote to a professor on September 30, 1933, 'I'm absolutely convinced that any man coming together with the Führer for just ten minutes a week is capable of ten times his normal output.'

Gradually the network of highways spread. They followed routes that engineers had previously claimed impassable, for example across broad moors like the south shore of Lake Chiemsee in Bavaria. Long viaducts like the Mangfall bridge, 200 feet high, were personally selected by Hitler from seventy competing designs, for their simple but solid lines: 'What we're building,' he explained, 'will still be standing long after we've passed on.' He toured the sites and spoke with the workers. 'When I'm as old as you,' he flattered one seventy-year-old labourer at Darmstadt, 'I'd like to be able to work like you now.' In November 1936, he gave orders that the Reich's western frontiers were to be marked on the autobahns by monuments 130 feet high.

With his rearmament programme already under way, the next logical step would be to disrupt the League of Nations. Hitler had earlier told Hindenburg that it resembled nothing if not a ganging-up by the victors to ensure that they could exact the spoils and booty of the World War from the vanquished. For a long time he had however believed in continuing the discussions in Geneva, while his generals favoured pulling out. Late in September Neurath also urged him to pull out of Geneva, but again Hitler had adopted the more moderate view. It was not until the morning of October 4 that Blomberg succeeded in talking him round. Hitler formally notified the Cabinet of the decision on the thirteenth. He now proposed to withdraw from the League the next day, October 14, 1933. It was a risky decision, but when Hitler sent Walter Funk, Goebbels's state secretary, to East Prussia to procure the field marshal's approval, Hindenburg boomed:

'At last a man with the courage of his convictions!' At the Cabinet meeting on October 13, Hitler announced that he would dissolve the Reichstag next day too, to give the public a chance to vote their approval of his 'peace policies' in a plebiscite. On November 12, 40·5 million Germans voted in his favour, or over 95 percent of all votes cast. Two days later the deputy Chancellor, Papen, congratulated Hitler before the assembled Cabinet:

> We, your nearest and dearest colleagues, stand here today under the impact of the most extraordinary and overwhelming votes of support ever accorded by a nation to its leader. Through the genius of your leadership and through the ideals you recreated before us, you have succeeded in just nine months in creating from a nation torn by internal strife and bereft of hope, one united Reich with hope and faith in the future. . .

Bypassing his own foreign ministry, Hitler began to send Joachim von Ribbentrop, the haughty but well-connected businessman whom Rudolf Hess had appointed as head of the Nazi Party's own 'foreign bureau,' on diplomatic missions.

Significantly, the first, in November 1933, was to Britain. In London Ribbentrop wooed Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald and met leading politicians like Stanley Baldwin, Sir John Simon, and Anthony Eden. Ribbentrop's own secret notes for Hitler, reporting these meetings, have now been found. He had assuaged Macdonald's fears about the Jewish Problem. 'I told him,' Ribbentrop minuted, 'that in our experience such a revolution in most other countries would have probably cost the lives of several tens of thousands of Jews; but that Hitler was anything but bloodthirsty, and that we in Germany had solved this problem by a twenty-four-hour boycott and by taking certain clear measures against being swamped by Jews.' Ribbentrop waved aside an interruption by the prime minister, saying: 'Probably a more humane manner of solving such a problem has never been hit upon. We regard it as astonishing that the healthy British people should have allowed Jewish émigrés to turn their heads.' Germany was confident that the whole world would eventually sympathise.

On November 20, 1933, Ribbentrop saw the Conservative leader Stanley Baldwin. 'I told [him],' he reported, 'that a new war between Germany and France was quite impossible, as was one between Britain and Germany, and that this is a fundamental principle in the mind of the chancellor, not only during his lifetime but as a testament for his nation for future years.'

Ribbentrop truthfully reassured the British that Hitler had no intention of developing a global maritime strategy, so Britain and Germany could easily resolve any differences over the size of their respective navies. Later that day the prime minister described himself, as Ribbentrop reported to Hitler, as a great believer in friendship with Nazi Germany. Six days later Macdonald repeated that his government would do what it could to reach an accord with Hitler. 'When you report to the chancellor,' the prime minister said, 'please tell him in confidence from me that we shall certainly find a common path to tread.'

Ribbentrop claimed that it was thanks to his secret diplomacy with Baldwin, Simon, and Anthony Eden that the latter paid his first visit to Berlin in February 1934.

British Ambassador Sir Eric Phipps did what he could to freeze Ribbentrop out of the talks. Characteristically, for Ribbentrop was already trampling his way into the upper echelons of power, he dictated this immediate plaint to Hitler: 'I hear that the chancellor [Hitler] is to breakfast with Mr. Eden and the British ambassador. I should like to suggest that he remark to Mr. Eden that I have the chancellor's confidence in foreign affairs, as this is my sole legitimation.' Writing to Hitler again on February 19 to urge him to allow Eden to return home with some kind of success – the Englishman was young and francophile, but he had fought well in the war and was certainly an up-and-coming Conservative politician – Ribbentrop repeated: 'I should also like to remind you how necessary and worthwhile it would be for the chancellor to mention in his talk with Mr. Eden that it is I who have his confidence in foreign affairs.'

The obstacle to agreement with Britain remained her ties to France. A few weeks later, as Ribbentrop's secret file shows, he attempted to secure a deal with the French. Visiting the seventy-year-old foreign minister, Louis Barthou, in Paris on March 4, 1934, he learned of the 'dark forces' at the Quai d'Orsay, like Barthou's deputy Alexis Léger, who had always been militantly anti-German. Barthou challenged Ribbentrop to explain how Hitler could talk of peace, when every French agent – he pointed here to a thick dossier – was reporting that he was madly rearming for war; Barthou also referred specifically to the paramilitary training of the SA and SS. Ribbentrop rejoined that France was also rearming in violation of the Treaty of Versailles.

It seemed that France would remain a problem. On August 25, 1934, Ribbentrop reported to Hitler that they would somehow have to eliminate

the francophile tendencies of the British foreign office. Perhaps they should get to work on King George V. 'In England,' he dictated, 'the Crown has a vastly greater influence than we have been accustomed to assume. As the Royal Family has certain sympathies for Germany, I have the hope that we shall meet there with some assistance for our foreign policy. I shall keep the chancellor *au courant*. I shall report separately,' Ribbentrop added in his flamboyant handwriting, 'on the fundamental question of how an accord with Britain is to be achieved.'

In 1933 Hitler's powers were still far from absolute. He had no influence over the senior army appointments, for example. And General von Schwedler's army personnel branch was a 'hotbed of reaction' in his eyes. In February 1934 however the army's Commander in Chief, Hammerstein, was replaced by Baron Werner von Fritsch.

Fritsch used an outsized monocle; he had a grating academic voice and a manner of sitting bolt upright with his hands on his knees, as though this were so prescribed in some army manual. For all this however Fritsch was a fervent nationalist.

He shared with many Germans a hatred of the Jews, the 'Jewish press,' and a belief that 'the pacifists, Jews, democrats, black-red-and-gold, and the French are all one and the same, namely people bent on Germany's perdition.' He had a soft spot for Hitler and ordained in February 1934 that the army should include the Nazi swastika in its insignia. From his private letters and manuscripts it is clear that Fritsch came to like working for Hitler, but could find as little respect for the 'hotheads' surrounding him as could they for this conservative, hesitant, and cautious general.

On the day Fritsch first reported to him, Hitler told him: 'Create an army that will be as powerful as possible, of inner homogeneity and uniformity and of the highest possible standard of training.'

The success of Hitler's January 1933 'revolution' had rendered Ernst Röhm's street army of brownshirt brawlers and bullies largely superfluous. The SA had swollen to two and a half million men.

Encouraged initially by Blomberg and Reichenau it had been given rudimentary military training by the regular army as a sop to Party feelings. By early 1934 however the SA wanted more: it became a real threat not only to the puny regular army, but to Hitler too. Röhm believed that Hitler was betraying the 'socialist' character of his programme, and he demanded the creation of a People's Army based on the SA.

Hitler had seen this storm brewing since the summer of 1933, when he had addressed a joint meeting of SA and Reichswehr officers at Bad Godesberg on the Rhine. There he had explained that every revolution must be followed by a period of evolution. This play on words left the SA unsatisfied. Friction increased, despite an appeal by Blomberg to Röhm in mid-January 1934 not to rock the boat. On February 1 – the day Fritsch took over the army – Röhm responded with a memorandum demanding nothing less than a merger of the regular army into the SA, with himself, Röhm, as Commander in Chief.

To Röhm, 'revolutionary spirit' was all-important, but not to Fritsch. 'The army is founded on discipline,' he argued at a worried conference with Blomberg on February 3, 'and not on any "revolutionary spirit."' Together they resolved to defeat Röhm.

For diplomatic reasons, Hitler tried to postpone a showdown. When the British foreign secretary Anthony Eden visited Berlin to complain about the secret Luftwaffe and the violations of the spirit of Versailles, Hitler pledged that the huge SA would be demilitarised. He summoned the SA leaders and Reichswehr generals to the war ministry building on February 28, and rudely dispelled Röhm's aspirations to an SA 'People's Army.' One army general, Curt Liebmann, noted that day:

> H[itler] said this: 'When I took over the government in January 1933, I felt I was marching forward along a broad, well-paved road. Then however that road got narrower, and the surface worse. It turned into a narrow footpath – and today I have a feeling that I am inching my way forward, along a tightrope, while every day fresh burdens are thrust on me, now on the right, now on the left.'

Only the existing Reichswehr with its professional officers could satisfy his main need; according to another general, Maximilian von Weichs, who took shorthand notes of the speech, Hitler added: 'The new army must be capable of all manner of defence within five years; and of all manner of attack within eight.' Since the western powers would probably not permit Germany to win Lebensraum, short sharp wars might be necessary in the west, 'and after them, wars in the east.'

Hitler later learned, perhaps from telephone surveillance, that Röhm had that same day ridiculed him as 'that ignorant World War corporal.' The Forschungsamt put a wiretap on the principal SA telephones. Röhm's move-

ments were watched. He was seen in contact with the former war minister Schleicher, and with foreign diplomats. One diplomat, evidently a Frenchman, encouraged him that he might become the 'Bonaparte of the Third Reich.' The SA was observed to be stockpiling weapons – evidently for a 'second revolution,' in which Hitler would be deposed.

ALTHOUGH ERNST Röhm was one of his former closest friends, one of the privileged few with whom he exchanged the familiar *du*, Hitler decided to make an example of him. His motives are still obscure. Only once, in September 1939, is Hitler known to have discussed privately what he knew of Röhm's machinations, and by that time he was already probably rationalising rather than recalling:

> I knew that in France particularly there were powerful forces urging intervention – the terms of the Versailles Diktat provided justification enough. I have to thank the French ambassador [François-Poncet] alone that it did not come to that. I was reading all his dispatches [*intercepted by the FA*]. I knew that Röhm was mixed up in treasonable dealings with him and the French. I could see however that Poncet was confidentially advising Paris against any intervention – the French should wait until civil war broke out here, which would make things easy for them.*
>
> It was only knowing this that kept me going throughout 1933 and 1934.

Certain facts are clear. The SA *was* planning to overthrow Hitler's government: shadow ministers had already been nominated. Blomberg showed to Hitler an apparently genuine order signed by Röhm on May 23 for the SA to procure arms where it could, so as to 'put muscle into the SA's dealings with the Wehrmacht.' The language could hardly have been plainer. Hitler was convinced. He told his Cabinet later, 'This completed the evidence of high treason.' Soon his agents indicated that the SA group Berlin-Brandenburg, under Karl Ernst, was stockpiling illegal arms for an operation 'at the end of June.' This gave him something of a deadline, but Hitler allowed the plot to thicken first. At the beginning of June, he had a

*The Forschungsamt was continuously deciphering the French diplomatic cables, but the French diplomatic archives do not now appear to contain any reports indicating that Röhm was conspiring with M. François-Poncet, and in correspondence with me the latter has denied it.

four-hour showdown with Röhm. Röhm gave his word of honour to go on leave to Bavaria from June 7, and to send the SA on thirty days' leave in July. One high-ranking army officer – Colonel Eduard Wagner – wrote to his wife on the eleventh, 'Rumour has it that Röhm won't be coming back.'

Someone selected the last day of June 1934, a Saturday, for the purge – Saturday was certainly Hitler's favourite day for staging coups de theatre in later years. He evidently tipped off Admiral Raeder that the balloon would go up then, as the admiral in turn cryptically recommended his senior staff to postpone a week-long study cruise that they were planning for that week, without giving any cogent reason. Both Raeder and Göring were guests at a dinner with the British ambassador on June 16, during Hitler's absence in Venice. Göring, a woman journalist noted in her diary, arrived twenty minutes late, medals a-clank. 'I beg your pardon,' he apologised. 'Message from Venice that the Führer had booked a call, and I had to wait for him to come to the 'phone.' Leaning across the table to Raeder he added, 'I was willing to fly straight down to him if he needed but he said, "Stay where you are, I'm coming back sooner than I thought." Something's up.' The admiral, noted the journalist, bit his lip; François-Poncet smirked and the servants carried on without a word.

Rumours multiplied. Franz von Papen made hostile references to the Nazis in a speech at Marburg. On June 21 Hindenburg told Hitler to 'bring the trouble-makers finally to reason.' Hitler told Goebbels that day that he had seen through Papen: 'He's caused himself a whole heap of trouble,' he said. The next day, June 22, he had a plane bring Viktor Lutze, a reliable if colourless Brownshirt commander, over from Hanover and, after swearing him to secrecy, told him that he had received word that Ernst Röhm was plotting against the 'reactionary' Reichswehr. He intended to retire him, he said, and he told Lutze to stand by to receive further orders. On the twenty-third, General von Fritsch began issuing orders alerting his army units. Machine-gun nests appeared in the corridors of the war ministry. The army discussed with the SS how far it could abet operations against the SA by supplying weapons, ammunition, and transport to the SS. In the files of Army District VII (i.e., Munich) there is a cryptic note dated June 28, 1934: 'Reich war ministry advises: . . . Chancellor's attitude is [I] am convinced of army's loyalty. Reichenau in buoyant mood. Röhm's order.'

Hitler and Göring left Berlin that day for the Ruhr to attend the wedding of the local gauleiter Terboven. Under enemy interrogation in July 1945 Göring would testify: 'There [in Essen] we were informed that Röhm

had given the SA orders to stand by, and had summoned all SA commanders to meet him at Wiessee.' There were odd signs of something in the air. Lutze noticed that Hitler was called away to the telephone. Initiating steps to crush what looked like a putsch, Hitler sent Göring straight back to Berlin. An uneasy atmosphere descended on the wedding feast. There were phone calls from Göring and Himmler in Berlin, and from the Gestapo. Göring's secretary 'Pili' Körner arrived from Berlin bringing a sheaf of wiretaps. These seemed to indicate that Röhm and his associates were planning to start their putsch at four P.M. on Saturday the thirtieth. Hitler announced, 'I'm going to make an example of them.'

Röhm was with his henchmen at Bad Wiessee, a watering hole outside Munich. Late on June 28 Hitler telephoned to Röhm's adjutant orders to meet him there at eleven A.M. on the thirtieth. Erhard Milch's recollection in 1945 was that Göring had sent his state secretary Paul Körner over to Hitler with a number of Forschungsamt wiretaps proving Röhm's guilt. Former Forschungsamt employees have confirmed that Regierungsrat Rudolf Popp, chief of the FA 'Assignments' section, played a major part in uncovering the coming putsch.

The next morning he phoned Goebbels, in Berlin, and ordered him to fly over immediately and join him at the Rhine Hotel Dreesen in Bad Godesberg. 'So – it's on,' wrote Goebbels in his diary. 'In God's name!' he then wrote, and added: 'Anything however is better than this awful waiting.' Hitler told him to bring his new private secretary Christa Schroeder, then twenty-five, with him.

Wearing a lightweight white summer coat, the minister arrived at the hotel at four P.M. Viktor Lutze joined them both a few minutes later. Hitler briefed Goebbels that he was about to take out the mutinous SA leadership, among them many of Goebbels's closest old friends.

'Drawing blood,' recorded Goebbels with approval. 'Got to realise that mutiny costs them their neck. I agree with this. If do it you must, then ruthlessly. Proofs that Röhm was conspiring with François-Poncet, Schleicher, and Strasser. So, action!' he added, in this previously unpublished diary. 'After reaching his decision, the Führer is very calm. We while away the hours in discussions. Nobody must notice a thing. Talk with Lutze, the new [SA] chief of staff. He's very good.' For an hour they watched a torchlight parade staged by the Labour Service, and a human torchlight swastika forming on the far bank of the river as the sun went down. 'The Führer is tense but very firm,' Goebbels narrated. 'We all keep silent.' To-

ward midnight, as both Lutze and Goebbels recorded with curiosity in their diaries, Hitler took another phone call from Berlin. 'The rebels are arming themselves,' Goebbels recorded. 'Not a moment to be lost.' A pale and trembling Hitler announced, 'We're on our way.' He advised Goebbels to phone his wife to betake their family to safety in Berlin.

At midnight on the twenty-ninth Hitler startled them all with a decision to fly to Bavaria in person. His adjutant Brückner speculated that a courier had brought further crucial information from Berlin. Word certainly reached Hitler, before he took off, that incidents had broken out in Bavaria and that the Berlin SA had been alerted for some kind of operation at four P.M. next day, the thirtieth.

Hitler took off soon after two A.M. on June 30 for Munich. Army officers were waiting on the airfield to greet him. He tore the insignia from the two bemused local SA commanders, August Schneidhuber and Wilhelm Schmid, and packed them off to Stadelheim prison, where they were joined later by a bus-load of other SA worthies. After a brief call on the local ministry of the interior his party set out for Bad Wiessee at five-thirty A.M., riding in three open Mercedes limousines, with Hitler, Lutze, and Hess in the first, detectives in the second, and Goebbels in the third.

Not without personal risk, Hitler himself rooted Röhm, Edmund Heines, and his other henchman out of their rooms at the Wiessee lakefront hotel. Goebbels described in his diary, 'The Chief was brilliant. Heines pitiful. With a rent boy. Röhm remained calm. Everything went off very smoothly.' Heines appealed to Lutze as he was taken away, 'I've done nothing! Help me!' He and the others were however beyond redemption. By eight A.M. he was back in Munich.

Of great interest is the record of Hitler's utterances filed that day by the headquarters of General Adam, commanding the local Army District:

> All the SA commanders are now under lock and key except Gruppenführer Ernst. I [Hitler] was aware of his [Röhm's?] weaknesses, but I hoped for a long time to be able to channel this affair along the right lines. It's all over now. It's been infinitely hard for me to part from comrades who have fought in this struggle of ours for years on end. These people would have ruined the entire SA. I had to put a stop to it some time.
>
> The scenes during our swoop on Wiessee were scandalous and shameful – more disgusting than I would ever have thought possible.

> Now I have laid down a clear line: the army is the only bearer of arms. Every man, whether SA or not, is in future at the army's disposal. Any man at whom the Wehrmacht crooks its finger, belongs to it. I have maximum faith in the Wehrmacht and the Reich war minister. A line has had to be drawn. You can rest assured that I shall now establish order.

There were admittedly some facts that did not fit in with Hitler's version of events. Far from putsching in Berlin, SA Gruppenführer Ernst was halfway to Bremen harbour, setting out on a cruise with his young bride. At Potsdam, a gang of men burst into General Schleicher's house and gunned him down at his desk; his wife, who got in the gunmen's way, was also shot. Ironically, Göring's Forschungsamt was still tapping Schleicher's phone; when homicide detectives from the Potsdam prosecutor's office telephoned the justice ministry from the house, to report that Schleicher was evidently the victim of a 'political assassination,' Göring angrily contradicted them – the official version would, he said, be quite different. General von Bredow also met a sticky end, as did some of Papen's staff, including his secretary the controversial Dr. Edgar Jung.*

Back at party headquarters in Munich, Hitler phoned the code word *Kolibri* to Berlin, the signal for Göring to launch the counter-attack there. Later that morning, he revealed to his cronies that some of those arrested were to be shot. The Gestapo had a list of names, several marked with a cross, ✠. Running his eye down the list, Lutze noticed that Röhm was not among them: Röhm had been of course an intimate friend of Hitler.

For some time Hess argued that it would not be fair to spare Röhm; the axe should fall on all or none of them. Röhm's name however was still not checked on the list of seven names which Hitler turned over to Sepp Dietrich, the stocky commander of the SS Leibstandarte (Lifeguards) Regiment, at five P.M. The six others were stood before a firing squad at Stadelheim prison later that day. At eight P.M., Hitler flew back to Berlin by Junkers 52 plane with Goebbels. Göring met them at Tempelhof airport; Hitler found that the secret air force's deputy chief Erhard Milch had drawn up a guard of honour in the uniforms of the new Luftwaffe.

* The Secret State Archives in Munich reveal that Dr. Jung had been one of three hired assassins employed by the Bavarian government, and that he had liquidated among others the separatist leader Heinz-Orbis in 1924.

Göring now revealed, to Hitler's quiet dismay, that he had arbitrarily added several other names to the hit-list. 'Göring reports that all went to plan in Berlin,' recorded Goebbels that day. 'Only cock-up: Mrs Schleicher bought it too. Tough, but can't be helped.'

Christa Schroeder – Hitler's private secretary, whom he had commanded to accompany him throughout this violent excursion to Bavaria – recalls sitting alone later that evening in the chancellery, eating her vegetarian meal, when Hitler unexpectedly joined her. He exclaimed: 'So! Now I have taken a bath, and feel clean as a new-born babe again.'

MUCH HAD in fact happened that unsettled Hitler. Göring had wantonly liquidated Gregor Strasser, Hitler's rival, and there had been a rash of killings in Bavaria. Hitler learned that somebody had killed his old friend Pastor Bernhard Stempfle, an almost daily acquaintance of earlier years, who had helped edit the turgid pages of *Mein Kampf* for publication. Hitler's adjutant Brückner later described in private papers how Hitler vented his annoyance on Himmler when the Reichsführer SS appeared at the chancellery with a final list of the victims – eighty-two all told. In later months Viktor Lutze told anybody who would listen that the Führer had originally listed only seven men; he had offered Röhm suicide, and when Röhm declined this 'offer' Hitler had had him shot too.* Hitler's seven had become seventeen, and then eighty-two. 'The Führer was thus put in the embarrassing position of having to sanction all eighty-two killings afterward,' complained Lutze. Lutze put the blame squarely on Himmler and Göring.

Over lunch on July 1 Dr. Goebbels found Hitler pale and bitter. 'Göring tenders his report,' he wrote. 'Executions almost over. A few still needed. It's tough but necessary. Ernst, Strasser, Senle [Stempfle], Detten ✝. One final sweep and we're through the worst. For twenty years there must be peace.' He whiled away the afternoon hours with Hitler. 'I cannot leave him on his own,' reported Goebbels, no doubt pleased to be in this sanctuary. 'He's suffering badly, but hanging tough. The death sentences are pronounced with the utmost gravity. Around sixty all told.' Under pressure from others, Hitler that day yielded and ordered Röhm's name added to the death list. 'Twice Röhm is left alone for twenty minutes with a pistol,' recorded Goebbels in his dramatic diary of these events. 'He doesn't use it and is then

* Martin Bormann's diary lists seven names on June 30, 1934: 'Röhm plot uncovered: Schneidhuber, Count Spreti, Heines, Hayn, Schmid, Heydebreck, Ernst all shot.'

shot. With that, it's all over.' Sepp Dietrich called in to report, 'a bit white about the gills,' as Goebbels described, adding: 'We're not cut out to be executioners.'

In an act of rare magnanimity Hitler ordered state pensions provided for the next of kin of the people murdered in the Night of the Long Knives, as June 30, 1934 came to be known. Even so he began to suffer nightmares and could not sleep. His medical records reveal that stomach ailments began to plague him from this episode on; but the long-term benefits seemed worth it – he had purchased the undivided loyalty of the Reichswehr generals – formed a 'blood brotherhood,' one might say. On July 3 Blomberg as war minister thanked him on behalf of the assembled Cabinet. The Cabinet retrospectively legalised most of the killings as 'acts of state emergency.'* 'One can now see clearly again,' wrote Goebbels. 'Events came dramatically to a head. The Reich was on the edge of an abyss. The Führer saved it.' Over the next days however it dawned on Hitler that many of his henchmen had taken things into their own hands. After a visit by Hitler to his lakeside cottage, Goebbels recorded cryptically: 'He now sees things quite clearly. Lutze has become suspicious too.' Hitler had belatedly deduced the extent to which Göring, Himmler, and the armed forces had manipulated him.

After the Cabinet meeting, Hitler flew to East Prussia and reported to the fast-fading president. Hindenburg was sympathetic. 'My dear Chancellor,' he whispered, 'those who make history must be able to shed blood. . .'

* Not all the killings were thus legalised. The Cabinet minutes of August 2, 1934, refer to a number of people charged with having settled private scores: in one case, a litigant had shot a man on June 30 simply for having testified against him during a civil action.

Triumph of the Will

Before july 1934 was over, there was further damage to Hitler's image abroad. In an impatient attempt at overthrowing the dictatorial regime in Vienna, panicky Austrian SS gunmen shot dead the chancellor, Engelbert Dollfuss, in his Viennese office on July 25. Mussolini was deeply shocked at the murder, and this set back German-Italian relations.

In later years Hitler protested his complete ignorance of the plot. The Goebbels diaries, preserved on microfiches in Moscow, and the private papers of the military commander of Bavaria's Military District VII give the lie to this however. After returning from Venice in June, Hitler had confided to Dr. Goebbels his belief that Mussolini had agreed to give him carte blanche in Austria: 'Out with Dollfuss!' was Goebbels note on that. 'New elections under a neutral man of confidence. Influence of Nazis depending on number of votes. Economic issues to be resolved jointly by Rome and Berlin. Both are agreed. Dollfuss will be notified!' (The two dictators had also discussed other matters. On disarmament, Mussolini fully endorsed Hitler's position: 'France has gone mad,' he had said. They had also discussed 'the East' – they would try to build on a closer friendship with Poland 'and seek a modus vivendi with Russia.') Hitler mentioned the coming coup in Vienna to Goebbels over lunch on July 10, and the minister found him conferring secretly with the Austrian Nazi leader Theo Habicht at the annual Richard Wagner festival in Bayreuth on July 22. Goebbels was sceptical as to whether it would come off, but Hitler that morning ordered General Wilhelm Adam to report to him in Bayreuth. To the perplexed general Hitler revealed,

'Today the Austrian army is going to overthrow the government!' He revealed that Dr. Anton Rintelen, a prominent Austrian politician, was going to take Dollfuss's place, and that Rintelen would authorise the return of all Austrian refugees, i.e. the Austrian Nazis who had fled into Germany. Adam's job would be to equip these Austrian 'legionaries' with weapons from German army stocks.

Hitler assured him, 'The moment I get word from Vienna I'll inform you, then you will believe me.' Soon the first reports came in, and they were not good. 'Big rumpus,' noted Goebbels. 'Colossal tension. Awful wait. I'm still sceptical.' At three P.M. Hitler telephoned. 'Everything is going according to plan in Vienna. The government building is in our hands. Dollfuss has been injured – the rest of the news is confused as yet. I'll phone again.' He never did however, because Dollfuss was dead; and Europe's capitals were in uproar.

The Habicht plot had failed for three reasons. First, he had exaggerated the size of his following in Austria – particularly the support from the Austrian army. Second, the plot had been leaked to Dollfuss's cabinet, and some ministers had betaken themselves to safety. And third, the illegal Austrian SA movement, disgruntled by the events of June 30 in Germany, wilfully withheld the support they had promised. The SS gang involved made matters worse for Hitler by appealing in a panic to the German legation for assistance. Hitler disowned them. He closed the frontier, sent a telegram of sympathy to Dollfuss's widow, and at Goebbels's suggestion he dismissed Habicht. The assassins were publicly hanged in Vienna.

Two days after Dollfuss's murder, Hitler spoke frankly to Goebbels about the future. 'He has a prophetic vision,' noted the minister. 'Germany as master of the world. Job for a century.'

Hitler sent Franz von Papen, his vice-chancellor, to Vienna as 'special ambassador,' and rushed Dr. Hans Lammers up to Neudeck in East Prussia to notify President Hindenburg. Lammers returned with word that the aged president was dying. On August 1 Hitler himself flew to Neudeck to take leave of the field marshal. It was difficult for the dying and delirious old man to speak, and he kept addressing Hitler as 'your Majesty.' That evening Hitler told his Cabinet that the doctors gave Hindenburg less than twenty-four hours to live. The Cabinet enacted the following law:

> The office of Reich President is combined with that of Reich Chancellor. In consequence, the previous powers of the Reich President will devolve

on the Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler. He will nominate his own deputy.

Hindenburg died next day, his last words being to convey his best wishes to Herr Hitler. In a plebiscite on August 19, 90 percent of the German people voted in favour of the new law. 'Thus,' Hitler said triumphantly to Blomberg, 'I have conquered Germany.'

THE OATH of allegiance of the Wehrmacht was now transferred to the Führer. Only Blomberg as war minister could actually issue orders however, a formal obstacle which would not be removed until 1938.

Meantime, Himmler's own SS regiments began to appear, the spectacular parades of his tall and muscular troops being the highlight of the Party Rally in 1934. The SS uniform was black and elegant, and there was no shortage of candidates for this immaculate elite that Himmler had created. The SS had an enforced mysticism which even Hitler found slightly ludicrous: in 1940, witnessing the pagan Yule celebration of the SS Leibstandarte at Christmas, he quietly mocked to an adjutant that this would never take the place of 'Silent Night.' He announced to Blomberg that he would allow the SS to raise only one armed division, the *Verfügungstruppe* – the forerunner of the Waffen SS.

To Hitler the Waffen SS was a fourth armed service, an elite. As late as 1942 he ruled that the peacetime ratio of Waffen SS to regular army should be pegged at one to ten. The army, however, envied and mistrusted the SS. Now that the SA had been emasculated General von Fritsch suspected that Himmler was intriguing against him. Generals claimed that the SS was assembling dossiers on them. Hidden microphones were actually discovered in the military district HQ in Munich. In 1938, when the safe in Blomberg's office would not shut properly, it was found to be jammed by a wire which was traced to an amplifier beneath the floorboards; the Abwehr traced the wiring to the Gestapo HQ. The second half of 1934 was marked by this open hostility between the Party and the Wehrmacht. The Party suspected that Fritsch was plotting an army coup against Hitler. Colonel Karl Bodenschatz heard his boss Göring discuss this with Hitler. Milch also confirmed these rumours. Hitler may have anticipated an assassination attempt. Believing himself even to be dying, in December 1934 he bent his mind to Germany's future without him, and on the thirteenth he persuaded the Cabinet to pass a law allowing him to name his own successor. A noisy

campaign began, fed by foreign newspapers and émigré organisations abroad, with talk of an impending bloodbath.

Hitler's nerves were so frayed that he summoned Party and Wehrmacht leaders to the Prussian State Opera house at short notice on January 3, 1935, and in a dramatic two-hour speech again stated his unswerving loyalty to the Wehrmacht, which he described as a pillar of state as vital for Germany's future as the Nazi Party – 'both of equal importance and invincible as long as they remain united.' Werner Best later recalled that the speech was a mixture of threats and exhortations: 'Its climax was his despairing pronouncement that he would put a bullet through his brains if the various Reich agencies refused to work in harmony.' Admiral Hermann Boehm recalled Hitler as saying, 'Suppose some Party official comes up to me and says, "That's all well and good, mein Führer, but General So-and-so is talking and working against you." Then I reply, "I won't believe it." And if he then says, "Here is the written proof, mein Führer," I tear the rubbish up, because my faith in the Wehrmacht is unshakeable.' Goebbels and Göring drafted a declaration of loyalty for the latter to read out to the Führer.

'After the Führer's speech,' Fritsch himself recorded, 'the witch-hunt by the SS died down for a time.'

HITLER ATTENDED to the Wehrmacht body and soul. He documented a genuine interest in military technology, his unusually receptive brain soaking up the data and dimensions shown to him so well that he could regurgitate them years later without an error. On February 6, 1935, he toured the army's research station at Kummersdorf – the first chancellor to do so since 1890. Blomberg and Reichenau actively supported the modern tank and armoured car prototypes displayed there by Guderian – but neither Fritsch nor his chief of staff, Ludwig Beck, looked favourably on this modern war technology. Beck was a calm, dedicated staff officer appointed in October 1933 for his right-wing views. He had connived in the events of June 30, 1934. He profoundly mistrusted radio however and all other newfangled gadgets.

After this display, Hitler decided he could flex the new Wehrmacht muscles. On March 9, 1935 – a Saturday – he formally announced that Germany had created a secret air force. A week later he reintroduced conscription in violation of Versailles. Goebbels recorded how that decision was reached: 'Discussions all Saturday morning [March 16]. Führer argues with Blomberg over the number of divisions. Gets his own way: thirty-six. Grand

proclamation to the people: Law on rebuilding the armed forces; conscription. To put an end to the haggling, you've got to create *faits accomplis*. The other side aren't going to war over it. As for their curses: stuff cotton wool in our ears. Cabinet 1:30 P.M.: Führer sets out situation. Very grim. Then reads out the proclamation and law. Powerful emotions seize us all. Blomberg rises to his feet and thanks the Führer. Heil Hitler, for the first time in these rooms. With one law, Versailles is expunged. Historic hour. Tremor of eternity! Gratitude that we are able to witness and take part in this.' Mussolini protested uneasily, and joined with France to repeat, at a mid-April 1935 meeting at Stresa, that any German violation of the demilitarised zone along the Rhine would call forth Italian intervention as well as British and French, under the terms of the Locarno treaty. General von Fritsch informed his army generals that any German violation of the Rhineland's status that year would certainly be 'the drop that overflows the barrel.'

That same month, however, Hitler learned that France was preparing an alliance with the Soviet Union, and that it was to be extended to include Czechoslovakia. Twenty-five big airfields were already under construction – far in excess of any legitimate Czech needs. On April 24 Fritsch assured his generals, 'The Führer is determined to avoid war, and will leave no stone unturned to that end. Whether he succeeds in this depends on us alone.' On May 2 Blomberg therefore circulated a secret provisional directive for Operation Training (*Schulung*), a possible surprise attack on Czechoslovakia designed to eliminate that risk in the event of war in the west. On July 10 Blomberg issued a further important directive. It provided that any French invasion of the Rhineland would be used as a *casus belli* by Hitler: he would stage a holding action there until the Rhine bridges could be blown. The Wehrmacht would then defend Germany on the Rhine.

In the meantime Hitler had resumed his overtures to Britain, again choosing Joachim von Ribbentrop as his negotiator. As he elucidated to his appreciative generals, speaking in Munich on March 17, 'My foreign ministry doesn't influence foreign policy – it just registers political occurrences.' His own view was: 'The British will come running to us sooner or later.'

Later that month Sir John Simon, the British foreign secretary, and Anthony Eden appeared in Berlin to try to secure some limitations on German rearmament. Hitler received them in the Congress Room of the chancellery and bragged that his army was expanding to thirty-six divisions, which was true, and that his Luftwaffe was already as big as the RAF, which was not. Ribbentrop delivered this advice to Hitler on April 3: 'I definitely

do not believe in a serious development this summer.' If Germany reached the spring of 1936 without trouble, then the danger of a crisis was past. Simon's visit had gone well, he said; he had returned to London convinced of the Führer's desire for peace. In fact Sir John had talked of a new German colonial empire, drawing his hand across the map of Africa from the French Congo to Italian Somaliland, but Hitler had interrupted him: 'I am not interested in colonies at present.' He had proposed that the British government agree to an expansion of the German navy to a mere thirty-five percent of the British tonnage. It was Ribbentrop's undoubted achievement that Britain eventually agreed. The Anglo-German naval agreement that was now signed inspired Hitler to believe that a far-reaching alliance would be possible with Britain later on.

In May 1935 he had had another, more personal preoccupation, a polyp that had begun to obstruct his vocal cords. He had always had a morbid terror of cancer, having seen his mother die of it, and he secretly feared that this polyp might prove to be a cancerous growth, doomed to cut short his global career before it had really begun. On May 5 the polyp was removed by Berlin's leading throat surgeon, Professor Carl von Eicken. Hitler was forbidden to speak for three days – he had to write down his instructions, even to Göring, who was bound for a conference with Mussolini in Rome. On May 25, as news reached him that the Anglo-German naval agreement was about to be signed, he was in Hamburg. Here too he was given the results of the pathological tests on the polyp – it was a non-malignant growth. 'Today,' he rejoiced to Admiral Raeder, 'is the happiest day of my life. This morning I was informed by my doctor that my throat infection is not serious; and this afternoon I receive this tremendous political news,' meaning the naval agreement.

AT THEIR last meeting in August 1934, the dying Field Marshal Hindenburg had whispered, 'Now, Herr Hitler, don't trust the Italians!' Hitler had reported this warning to his Cabinet, and added – according to Schwerin von Krosigk – that if ever he had to choose between Britain and Italy, Hindenburg's words would form the basis of his choice. His personal adjutant Fritz Wiedemann also quoted him as having said, 'If I have to choose between Britain and Mussolini, the choice is clear: Italy is obviously closer ideologically, but *politically* I see a future only in alliance with the British.' Not surprisingly, Hitler considered Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia on October 3, 1935, inopportune: 'The time for struggle between the static

and the dynamic nations is still some way off,' he declared. Britain and France announced sanctions against Italy. Hitler had to choose, and he chose Italy after all. He could not afford to see Fascist Italy destroyed. To his leading generals and ministers – as Keitel recalled – Hitler explained, 'The day may come,' he said, 'when Germany too has to stand up against outside intervention – the day when we also begin to stake our rightful claims.'

Wiedemann recalls, 'When Hitler was preoccupied with some plans or other, he often shut himself up alone in his room. You could hear him pacing restlessly up and down. The really big decisions like rearmament, occupation of the Rhineland, etc., he always took alone – mostly against the counsels of his staff and advisers. He knew full well that he alone had to bear the responsibility.'

Powerfully influenced by Dr. Goebbels, Hitler now abandoned the path of statesmanlike and responsible policies and embarked upon the slippery ascent toward European hegemony. By mid-January 1936 he had resolved to bolster up his none-too-robust regime by a fresh coup: he would remilitarise Germany's Rhineland – again in violation of Versailles. As a pretext he would take France's imminent ratification of her pact with Russia. Hitler could argue that the pact would be irreconcilable with Locarno. He revealed his intention to Dr. Goebbels on January 20. On February 27, over lunch with Göring and Dr. Goebbels, he still felt it premature to march into the Rhineland. The next day however France confirmed her treaty with the Russians. Goebbels, remarkably, urged caution, but Hitler had made up his mind. On March 2 Blomberg issued a preliminary directive. The next day Fritsch sent instructions for three infantry battalions to cross the Rhine to Aachen, Trier, and Saarbrücken on a given date; but Fritsch, referring to the July 10, 1935, directive, made clear that should the French counterattack, the German forces might have to withdraw to the Rhine.

On March 4 the French ratified the Russian pact. On the fifth Blomberg ordered the occupation of the Rhineland to begin two days later. The Cabinet approved. The infantry marched in. Hitler's step was greeted by a chorus of protest from the West, and by noisy sabre-rattling from the French. Blomberg lost his nerve and begged Hitler to withdraw before shooting broke out. The three German attachés in London sent a joint telegram of warning to Blomberg. Hitler's nerves stood the test better however, and neither Britain nor France moved a muscle against him; he attributed this in part to the intervention of Britain's new monarch, Edward VIII. 'If we

keep our nerve now,' felt Goebbels, reviewing the two week crisis in his diary, 'we've won.'

The German public was demonstrably impressed by Hitler's methods. At the end of March 1936 he received another overwhelming vote of popular support – this time the vote was over ninety to one in his favour.

CONTEMPLATING GERMANY'S economic position in 1936, Hitler chafed that so little had been accomplished to make the country self-sufficient – a basic prerequisite for war. In April he put Hermann Göring in charge of raw materials and foreign currency questions. Aboard his yacht *Grille* at Kiel he told Goebbels in May of his vision of a United States of Europe under German leadership. 'Years, perhaps even decades of work toward that end,' commented the minister in his diary. 'But what an end!' 'The Führer,' wrote Goebbels after a secret conference with Hitler, Papen, and Ribbentrop in June, 'sees a conflict coming in the Far East. Japan will thrash Russia. And then our great hour will come. Then we shall have to carve off enough territory to last us a hundred years. Let's hope that we're ready, and that the Führer is still alive.' Impatient at industry's slow progress, in August Hitler dictated to his secretary a rambling memorandum on the economy. 'Four precious years have passed,' he complained:

> Without doubt, we could by today already have been wholly independent of fuel, rubber, and even (in part) iron-ore imports from abroad.

Germany, he ordered, must be 'capable of waging a worthwhile war against the Soviet Union,' because 'a victory over Germany by Bolshevism would lead not to a new Versailles treaty but to the final annihilation, indeed the extermination [*Ausrottung*] of the German nation.' Hitler announced that he had to resolve once and for all Germany's economic problems by enlarging her Lebensraum and thus her sources of raw materials and food. In detail, Hitler stated these two demands: 'First: in four years the German army must be ready for action; and second, in four years the German economy must be ready for war.'

Hermann Göring himself, summoned to the Obersalzberg, was appointed head of this new 'Four-Year Plan.' Wiedemann would recall Göring remarking to Hitler: 'Mein Führer, if I am not mistaken in my views, a major war is inevitable within the next five years.' He read Hitler's memorandum to the other Cabinet members on September 4, making one thing

clear: 'It is based on the assumption that war with Russia is inevitable. What the Russians have accomplished, so can we.' Göring's state secretary, Paul Körner, wrote on September 7 to a colleague: 'Göring came back from the Obersalzberg bringing us the new guidelines for our work over the next years. Unfortunately I can't tell you more . . . but when you get back to Berlin, you'll find a clear path mapped out ahead.'

BY THE autumn of 1936 Hitler was already deeply involved in the Spanish Civil War. On July 25, in the interval of an opera at Bayreuth, emissaries from an obscure Spanish general, Francisco Franco, had been introduced to him by Canaris. They brought an appeal from Franco for aid in overthrowing the Republican government in Madrid. Franco wanted German transport planes to ferry Moroccan troops from Tetuan in North Africa to the Spanish mainland. By October a full-scale civil war was raging. Britain and France were committed with volunteers on the Republican side, and the first Russian tanks and bombs were detected. After discussing it with Göring, Milch, and Albert Kesselring – the Luftwaffe's new chief of staff – Hitler authorised full-scale Luftwaffe intervention. Göring sent a bomber squadron under the command of Colonel Wolfram von Richthofen to Spain on November 6.

Hitler welcomed this war for various reasons. He could test the new German equipment under combat conditions, and train successive waves of officers and men. Göring also welcomed it as a means of obtaining from Spain raw materials like tungsten, copper, and tannin for the Four-Year Plan. A day or two after Hitler delivered a 'major political speech' to his Cabinet on December 1 – of which no note survives – Göring commented to his department heads that the Luftwaffe was to be ready 'for instant action, regardless of the cost.' Germany wanted peace until 1941, Göring told them: 'We can never be sure however that there won't be complications before then. We are in a sense already at war, even if not yet a shooting war.'



Hitler enters the Berlin Reichstag on March 7, 1936 to proclaim the remilitarisation of the German Rhineland (U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

'One Day, the World'

By early 1937 the Nazi state could be likened to an atomic structure: the nucleus was Adolf Hitler, surrounded by successive rings of henchmen. In the innermost ring were Göring, Himmler, and Goebbels – privy to his most secret ambitions and to the means that he was proposing to employ to realise them. In the outer rings were the ministers, commanders in chief, and diplomats, each aware of only a small sector of the plans radiating from the nucleus. Beyond them was the German people. The whole structure was bound by the atomic forces of the police state – by the fear of the Gestapo and of Himmler's renowned establishments at Dachau and elsewhere.

There were advantages to being Führer. He had paid no income tax since 1933 – neither on the royalties for *Mein Kampf*, nor on the licence income for using his likeness on postage stamps. The facts were kept carefully secret, but he cared little for his image. He resisted every attempt made by well-meaning people to change his 'postman's cap,' his crinkly boots, and his outmoded moustache for styles more suited to the thirties. He desired neither present publicity nor the acclaim of posterity. He wrote to Hans Lammers directing that if the British *Who's Who* really insisted on having details of his life, they were to be given only the barest outline. As he explained years later, in a secret speech to his generals in 1944, when they protested at his harsh decisions on the Russian front: 'It is a matter of supreme indifference to me what posterity may think.'

Early in November 1937 Hitler told his staff that an outright Franco victory in Spain was not desirable: 'Our interest is in maintaining existing tensions in the Mediterranean.' That Franco was fighting the Communist backed Republicans was of only secondary importance. In April 1938 Hit-

ler would muse out loud to Reinhard Spitzy, Ribbentrop's private secretary: 'We have backed the wrong horse in Spain. We would have done better to back the Republicans. They represent the people. We could always have converted these socialists into good National Socialists later. The people around Franco are all reactionary clerics, aristocrats, and moneybags – they've nothing in common with us Nazis at all!'

His relations with Mussolini were equally illogical, springing from nothing more substantial than what he termed in *Mein Kampf* his 'intense admiration for this great man south of the Alps.' He lavished gifts on the Italian dictator. Henriette Hoffmann has described how Hitler was to be seen in his favourite Munich cafe with a bookbinder, inspecting leather samples for a presentation set of the philosopher Nietzsche's works for Mussolini: Hitler rubbed the leather skins, sniffed them, and finally rejected them all with the pronouncement, 'The leather must be glacier-green' – meaning the bleak blue-green of the glaciers from which Nietzsche's Zarathustra contemplated the world.

Despite Hitler's official visit to Venice in June 1934, Mussolini had gone his own way. Austria remained a bone of contention between them. Now that they were allies in Spain however the Duce began to refer to an 'Axis' between Rome and Berlin. In September 1937 the Duce was Hitler's guest for a week of the biggest military manoeuvres in Germany since 1918. Hitler showed off Germany's new weapons and machinery – like the high-pressure steam turbines being built for the new battle cruiser *Scharnhorst*. In Berlin the Duce addressed a crowd of 750,000. Afterward, a cloudburst brought Berlin's traffic to a standstill. At the President's Palace the Duce, soaked to the skin, encountered German officialdom at its most mulish, for a house rule dating back to the mists of Prussian history prohibited residents from drawing hot water for baths after seven P.M.

THE GERMAN public found Hitler's interest in Mussolini as incomprehensible as his shift to a pro-Japanese policy in the Far East. Until 1937 Blomberg, the army, and the foreign ministry had persuaded him to maintain an influential mission in China. The expectation was that the Chinese leader, Chiang Kai-shek, would exchange raw materials for German guns, ammunition, and arms factories. Hitler saw Chiang as corrupt and wife-dominated however, and predicted that his lack of contact with the people would drive the Chinese into the arms of the Bolsheviks. In 1936 he had authorised German-Japanese staff talks in Berlin, initiated by the Japanese military

attaché, General Hiroshi Oshima, and Ribbentrop's bureau. Again the foreign minister Neurath was left in the dark. After the Japanese declaration of war on China in June 1937, Hitler cancelled German aid to China. Ribbentrop demanded a military Tripartite Pact between Germany, Japan, and Italy, 'in anticipation of the inevitable conflict with the western powers.' The pact was signed in Rome on November 6, 1937.

It was concrete evidence of Hitler's smouldering disenchantment with the British. Ever since 1922 Hitler had looked on Britain as a future partner. He frankly admired the ruthlessness with which the British had grasped their empire. He had devoured volumes of English folklore. He knew that the three white rings on sailors' collars denoted Admiral Horatio Nelson's victories. He had repeatedly affirmed, 'The collapse of the British Empire would be a great misfortune for Germany.' Now he began sketching vague plans for assisting Britain if ever her colonies in the Far East should be attacked.

Ribbentrop shared his sentiments. He had already introduced numerous influential Englishmen to the Führer. In 1945 the Americans captured the transcripts of some of these audiences – with Lord Beaverbrook, proprietor of the *Daily Express*, on November 22, 1935; with Stanley Baldwin's private secretary Tom Jones on May 17, 1936; with the conductor Sir Thomas Beecham on November 13, 1936, and with many others. While these records have since vanished, Ribbentrop's own notes have now surfaced. He reported to Hitler that he had assured Tom Jones again and again that ever since Hitler had begun with seven men in Munich 'absolute co-operation and friendship between Britain and Germany had been a cornerstone of his foreign policy.' Ribbentrop would explain to the Turkish diplomat Acikalin in 1941 that far from being the Führer's 'evil genius,' the fact was that he had always advised Hitler to bend over backward to secure Britain's friendship. As ambassador in London, Ribbentrop would now secretly offer Baldwin an 'offensive and defensive alliance.'

It was a tragedy that Hitler knew so few Englishmen. He had met the Mitfords, Sir Oswald Mosley, Lords Londonderry and Rothermere, and the journalist Ward Price; and Major General J. F. C. Fuller, the acknowledged British tank expert, had also confidentially seen him. In September 1936, the wartime prime minister David Lloyd George spent two weeks in Germany as his guest, and admiringly wrote in the *Daily Express* how Hitler had united Catholic and Protestant, employer and artisan, rich and poor into one people – *Ein Volk*, in fact. (The British press magnate Cecil King

would write in his diary four years later. 'Lloyd George spoke of Hitler as the greatest figure in Europe since Napoleon and possibly greater than him.') Lloyd George revealed that in 1918 the British were on the point of throwing in the sponge, since Field Marshal Earl Haig had indicated that the Allied offensive could not continue much longer. Hitler would not tire of repeating the point to his weary generals when their own war entered its bleaker years.

In June, there was another contact with the Anglo-Saxon world when William Mackenzie King, the Canadian premier, had a two-hour talk with Hitler (he wrote in his diary his favourable impressions of the Nazis' 'constructive' work). To Hitler however the flavour of all the reports from London was that despite his secret assurances Britain had resumed a barely concealed rearmament effort, particularly of the RAF; and there was therefore a real time limit on achieving his secret strategic ambitions in the east. His military attaché reported from London on February 19, 1937: 'In any war, time will work *for* Britain, but only if she can survive initial defeats which would make it impossible for her to fight on.'

Hitler had explained to Ribbentrop back in 1935 that he was not proposing to repeat Admiral von Tirpitz's earlier error in getting involved in an arms race; he was going to concede naval supremacy to the British, and hope that they would make him a similar concession with regard to Germany's future land armies. In September 1938, however, the German naval staff would sadly summarise: 'The realisation has dawned on the navy and the Führer over the last one and a half years that, in contrast to what the Führer had hoped for at the time of the signing of the naval agreement, Britain cannot be excluded as a possible future enemy.'

Hitler had certainly not anticipated this 'estrangement'; he privately told Julius Schaub and others on his staff that it would not have occurred had Edward VIII not been forced to abdicate (in December 1936). His successor, the weak and ill-prepared King George VI, was wholly in the grip of his 'evil and anti-German advisers.' When Edward, now Duke of Windsor, visited Berchtesgaden in October 1937 he told Hitler much that confirmed this view. Unfortunately, the record of their meeting would also vanish from the files captured in 1945.

A less tangible reason for Hitler's restlessness was the realisation that the years were slipping by, while his grand design was remaining unfulfilled. The same uninspiring faces assembled in the Cabinet room. A civil servant,

the Gestapo official Werner Best, who sat in on one such meeting in 1937, found that the Führer had become 'increasingly nervous, bad-tempered, impatient, gloomy, abrupt, distrustful, unjust, dogmatic, and intractable. Glowering,' wrote Best, 'he listened to the submissions of the Reich ministers and retorted in a surly voice. His aversion to topics, to the wrangling, and even to the people present was obvious.' Hitler felt himself succumbing to the inertia of government bureaucracy. He took to appointing special plenipotentiaries to perform specific tasks. Cabinet meetings as such virtually ceased late in 1937. Instead Hitler dealt directly – through Lammers – with affairs of state, and he began to communicate his will directly to the ministers and generals without discussion.

With the end of Cabinet government in Germany things moved faster. Many times in 1937 and 1938 he spoke in private to Goebbels of his burning ambition to undo for ever the humiliation inflicted upon Germany by the Peace of Westphalia, which had brought the Thirty Years War to an end in 1648. A psychological requisite was the proper processing of public opinion. He was to explain in November 1938, with remarkable frankness:

> It was only by harping on Germany's desire and search for peace that I managed, little by little, to secure the freedom of action and the armaments that we needed to take each successive step.

The first target would be Austria. He proposed to win her by peaceful means if possible. Earlier in July 1937 he had appointed an SS Gruppenführer, Dr. Wilhelm Keppler, to act as the Nazi Party's special agent for Austrian affairs; but he warned Keppler that he would not contemplate a revolutionary solution. That same month Hitler was deeply moved by the participation at the big Breslau song festival of contingents from the German-speaking areas outside the Reich's frontiers – in Austria and Czechoslovakia. He made passing reference in his speech to '95 million Germans,' of whom only 68 million were at present part of his Reich. The Austrian contingent, in bright national costumes, stormed his tribune; the women wept uncontrollably. When Goebbels showed him the newsreels, Hitler ordered them suppressed to avoid reprisals against the Austrians seen cheering him; but it was a scene to which he frequently referred in private during the coming months.

Visiting Goebbels's villa at Schwanenwerder on the day after the festival, he confirmed that he was planning to make a 'clean sweep' in Austria, and that Czechoslovakia's turn would follow. There too there was a large

German minority. Quite apart from the 150,000 counted in 1930 in the more remote Slovakia, there were three and a half million ethnic Germans 'trapped' in Bohemia and Moravia by the artificial frontiers which had created Czechoslovakia in 1919.

Hitler denied the Czechs any right to be in Bohemia and Moravia at all: they had not filtered in until the sixth or seventh centuries. 'The Czechs are past masters at infiltration,' he was to state in October 1941. 'Take Vienna: before the World War, only about 170 of the 1,800 Imperial court officials were of German origin – all the rest, right up to the top, were Czechs.' Most of the ethnic Germans lived in the border 'Sudeten territories' where Czech and French engineers had laboured for years to erect fortifications. The Czech president, Dr. Eduard Beneš, had ruthlessly enforced the 'Czechification' of the local administration of these territories; Hitler described him inelegantly to Goebbels as 'a crafty, squinty-eyed little rat.' Baron von Neurath had tried to induce him to mollify these policies, without success.

The question was: when should Hitler strike? Spitzy recalls one scene at this time, of Hitler scanning the latest agency reports through gold-rimmed spectacles, while Ribbentrop peered over his shoulder. 'Mein Führer,' said Ribbentrop, 'I think we shall soon have to draw our sword from its scabbard!' 'No, Ribbentrop,' responded Hitler. 'Not yet.'

Blomberg's last directive to the Wehrmacht, in June 1937, had been primarily defensive. It had dwelt upon only two minor contingencies: 'Otto,' a German attack on Austria should she restore the hated Habsburg monarchy; and 'Green,' a surprise attack on Czechoslovakia *if* France or Russia invaded Germany (because the Russian air force must first be prevented from using the now-completed airfields in Czechoslovakia). General von Fritsch, the army's Commander in Chief, had dutifully ordered the army to study ways of breaching the Czech fortifications. Lunching with Goebbels on November 5, 1937 Hitler asked the propaganda minister to go easy on the Czechs for the time being, as they could not do anything about them yet. 'The Czechs are crazy,' reflected Goebbels, describing this conversation in his diary. 'They are surrounded by a hundred million enemies whose land and people they have usurped. *Na, prost!*' Hitler also instructed him to downplay both their future colonial demands and the church problem: they had to keep their propaganda powder dry.

To Hitler it seemed that his army lacked enthusiasm. It certainly lacked ammunition and arms for a long conflict. Germany was gripped by a severe

steel shortage. Early in 1937 the three services had been ordered to cut back their arms budgets. The navy argued emphatically against any reduction of warship construction now that Britain was emerging as a possible enemy too. The gap could not however be bridged. In consequence of the launchings planned in 1938, of the two battleships *Bismarck* and *Tirpitz*, all construction would have to be postponed except for one cruiser and one carrier. The Luftwaffe pointed out that it was getting 70,000 tons of steel a month. At Blomberg's suggestion Hitler called the Commander in Chief to the chancellery to settle the dispute.

Such was the background of one of Hitler's most portentous secret conferences – the so-called 'Hossbach Conference' of November 5, 1937 (the afternoon of his admonitory talk with Goebbels). Hitler decided to use this opportunity to reveal to them some of his secret goals (or, as he put it to Göring, 'to put some steam up Fritsch's pants'). Colonel Friedrich Hossbach, his Wehrmacht adjutant, wrote a summary five days later of the proceedings. Part of this has survived; so has a telegram sent by the French ambassador reporting what he had learned of Hitler's long meeting, and of the large number of generals and admirals summoned to the chancellery.

It was not a formal Cabinet meeting. The subject was far too important for such an audience, Hitler explained; but to lend solemnity to the proceedings (as he told Göring) he did invite foreign minister von Neurath, along with Blomberg, Göring, Raeder, and Fritsch to join him in the glass-walled conservatory of his 'official residence,' a wing of the chancellery. The glass doors were closed and a thick curtain drawn across. The dozen or so munitions and economics experts whom Blomberg had also rounded up, fruitlessly as it turned out, had to kick their heels for the next four hours in the smoking room next door. When the rest of the conference ended at 8:30 p.m., the word passed around:

'The navy has won!' and 'Only the navy gets twenty thousand tons.'

In that part of the speech of which Hossbach's record has survived, Hitler reiterated his determination to launch a war to solve Germany's Lebensraum problems within the next five or six years. As a first stage he might, under certain circumstances, order a 'lightning attack' on neighbouring Czechoslovakia during 1938. Hitler's view was that Britain had already tacitly written off Czechoslovakia, and that France would follow suit. He was so emphatic that Fritsch proposed cancelling his projected leave in Egypt, due to start in ten days' time. No objections were raised, either then or later. A directive relating to 'Green' was issued by Blomberg's

ministry on December 21: the western frontier defences would have to be improved, but Hitler would try to avoid war on two fronts and taking any other military or economic risks; should the political situation not develop as desired, 'Green' might have to be postponed for some years. On the other hand, the directive said, a situation might arise depriving Czechoslovakia of all her potential allies except Russia: 'Then "Green" will take effect even *before* Germany is fully prepared for war.'

Blomberg's directive shows how little he appreciated the full scope of Hitler's ambitions. As anyone who had read Chapter 14 of *Mein Kampf* knew, Hitler had set his sights much further afield. From his very first speeches he had drawn attention to Russia's open spaces; and if we apply the only proper yardstick, if we examine his long-term material preparations, only one conclusion remains – that his 'dream land,' his new empire, awaited him in the east. One such clue is in German admiralty files, a letter from the naval commandant at Pillau in East Prussia reporting a conversation between Hitler and the local Party gauleiter, Erich Koch, in June 1937: Hitler had, he said, warned of Pillau's coming importance as a naval base 'even more powerful than Kiel or Wilhelmshaven,' to accommodate a bigger fleet in future years. 'In the Führer's view the time will come – in say six or seven years – when Germany can progress from her present defensive posture to an offensive policy. Within Europe, this kind of development will only be possible toward the east.'

It is regrettable that no records have been found of most of Hitler's important speeches to his gauleiters, like that on June 2, 1937, to which Koch was probably referring. One speech to Party leaders survives on discs. In this harangue, delivered on November 23, 1937, he proclaimed: 'The British purchased their entire empire with less blood than we Germans lost in the World War alone. . . World empires are won only by revolutionary movements.' He is heard adding later, 'Today the German nation has at last acquired what it lacked for centuries – an organised leadership of the people.'

Hitler was not interested in overseas conquests. Therefore, when Lord Halifax, the British statesman, visited him in Bavaria on November 19 to discuss colonies for Germany in Africa he failed to excite the Führer's interest.

BY THE end of 1937 it was clear that the coming year would be dominated by two factors – by Hitler's ardent resolve to begin his fight for Lebensraum

and by the growing certainty that Britain would do all she could to thwart him. On December 27 Ribbentrop, now Hitler's ambassador in London, submitted to him an analysis of Britain's attitude.* She now regarded Germany as her most deadly potential enemy, he said. Chamberlain was currently formulating a new initiative with the hope of purchasing peace in Europe, in return for which the British would offer colonies, and certain concessions on Austria and Czechoslovakia. But, he warned, while the British were largely in favour of a lasting agreement with Germany, there was a hostile ruling class that could always swing the British public around to support war, for example by atrocity-mongering against the Nazis. There was, wrote Ribbentrop, a 'heroic' ruling class that would not shrink from war to protect their material interests as a world power. 'When Britain sees the odds improve, she will fight.'

> If Britain continues in future to block Germany at every turn, then there can be no doubt but that the two nations will ultimately drift apart. Nonetheless, it seems proper to me that our future policies should remain anchored to striving for agreement with Britain. The embassy will therefore work consistently toward an Anglo-German entente.

On January 2, 1938, Ribbentrop significantly amended this view. 'Today,' he wrote to the Führer, 'I no longer believe in a rapprochement. Britain does not want a Germany of superior strength in the offing as a permanent threat to her islands. That is why she will fight.'

The upshot was a demand by Hitler later in January for a strengthening of the German fleet. By the end of 1944 there were to be four battleships, although not the six the navy had previously planned.

On January 21 he delivered the first of many secret speeches to his generals. An anonymous three-page summary exists, showing that Hitler began with a description of the Roman Empire, and how thereafter Christianity had given western civilisation the inner unity it needed to stave off eastern invasions. 'Only one man can lead, but that man shoulders the entire burden of responsibility. It is a grave burden. Believe me, generals, . . . my nerves have gone to pieces and I just cannot sleep any longer for worry

* This document, which the author obtained, clearly proves that Ribbentrop did warn Hitler that Britain would fight. The document was 'not found' by the editors of the Allied official publication, *Documents on German Foreign Policy.*

about Germany.' Germany's food situation was particularly grim.

> Germany's position is really bleak. Day and night I battle with the problem. One fact leads me to believe however that there may be hope for the German nation yet: if we look closely at the ruling nations of this earth – the British, French, and Americans – the statistics show that only a vanishingly small component of them, perhaps 40 or 50 million pure-blooded citizens of the ruling country, are controlling millions of other human beings and gigantic areas of the world.
>
> There is only one nation on earth, living in the heart of Europe in great compactness, of uniform race and language, tightly concentrated: and that is the German nation, with 110 million Germans in Central Europe. This comparison gives us cause to hope. One day the entire world must and shall belong to this united block of Central Europe.



Watched by Heinrich Himmler, Hitler is mobbed by youthful admirers at the Bückeberg harvest festival in 1936 (HOOVER ARCHIVES)

First Lady

At one end of that broad Munich boulevard, the Ludwig Strasse, is the Victory Arch; at the other, the grimy stone Feldherrnhalle mausoleum.

Here, unsuspected by the silent crowds lining the icy sidewalks as dawn rose on December 22, 1937, Nazi Germany had jolted imperceptibly onto the course that was to lead it to ultimate ruination. It happened like this: General Erich Ludendorff, Hindenburg's old chief of staff in the Great War, had died, and his simple oak coffin was lying in the shadow of the Victory Arch draped with the Kaiser's colours and flanked by tall, black-shrouded pylons topped with bowls of lingering fire. High-ranking officers of the new *Wehrmacht* – the armed services – had stood, stiffly frozen, all night at each corner of the bier, carrying on silken cushions the eighty medals that the departed warrior had earned.

Hitler had arrived just before ten A.M., Werner von Blomberg – newly promoted to field marshal – had thrown his arm up in salute; General Hermann Göring, the Luftwaffe's commander and most powerful man after Hitler and Blomberg, had followed suit. (The army's commander, Baron Werner von Fritsch, was still in Egypt on holiday.) To the thud of muffled drums, six officers had hoisted the coffin onto a gun carriage.

The photographs show Hitler walking alone and ahead of his commanders and ministers, bareheaded, his face a mask, conscious that one hundred thousand eyes were trained on him. This, he knew, was what his people wanted to see: their Führer, followed by his faithful henchmen, surrounded by his subjects, united in a common act of spectacle and grandeur. As the last melancholy strains of 'The Faithful Comrade' died away, a nineteen-gun salute began from the battery in the Hofgarten, scattering indignant pigeons into the misty air.

Hitler left with his adjutants for the courtyard where the cars were waiting. Here Blomberg approached him: 'Mein Führer, can I speak somewhere with you in private?' Suspecting nothing, Hitler invited him to his private apartment. Within five minutes he was in the elevator at No. 16, Prinzregenten Platz. Here Blomberg asked Hitler's permission to marry again. His fiancée was of modest background – a secretary working for a government agency – but was this not what National Socialism was all about? Hitler gave his consent immediately.

With Blomberg, Hitler had established close rapport. Both he and Göring agreed without hesitation to act as witnesses at the wedding. The ceremony took place in private at the war ministry on January 12, 1938. The bride was twenty-four, while Blomberg was nearly sixty. She was undoubtedly attractive: she was slim, with fair hair, a broad forehead, grey-blue eyes, a petite nose, and a generous mouth. The couple departed immediately on their honeymoon, not knowing that their lopsided marriage would later be construed as having set Adolf Hitler on the final approach to absolute power.

Their honeymoon was soon interrupted by the unexpected death of Blomberg's mother. Blomberg's chief of staff General Wilhelm Keitel accompanied him to her funeral on January 20 at Eberswalde, thirty miles from Berlin. When the field marshal returned on the twenty-fourth, some disturbing news must have awaited him because he immediately applied for an urgent audience with Hitler.

Hitler had returned to Munich briefly to open the great arts and crafts exhibition there. When his car drew up outside the Berlin chancellery late on January 24 he found Göring waiting with a buff folder in his hands. 'Blomberg has married a whore!' Göring announced. 'Our new first lady has a police record. He tricked us into acting as witnesses.'

What had happened in Blomberg's absence was this: three days earlier, on January 21, the police president of Berlin, Count Wolf von Helldorff, had shown to Keitel an innocuous change-of-address record card and asked if Keitel could confirm that the lady in the photograph was the new Frau von Blomberg. Keitel, however, had only seen her at the funeral, heavily veiled; he had suggested that Göring be asked, as he had been at the wedding. Helldorff had explained that something of the woman's past had come to light now that she had routinely registered her change of address to Blomberg's apartment in the war ministry building. He had visited Göring the next morning and given him the complete police dossier on Fräulein Eva Gruhn – as she had been before her marriage.

As Hitler opened this buff-coloured dossier now, on January 24, a collection of file cards, photographs, and printed forms met his eyes. There were fingerprint records, Wanted posters, and half a dozen photographs showing a woman in various sexual poses with a wax candle. The police background statements yielded a stark mirror image of a Berlin society in the grips of economic crisis. Fräulein Gruhn's father had been killed in the war when she was five. Her mother was a registered masseuse. In 1932 Eva had left home at eighteen, and moved in with her lover, a Czech Jew of forty-one, one Heinrich Löwinger. Later that year he had been offered pornographic photographs, and it had struck him that this was easy money. He had hired a Polish photographer and the pictures were taken one Christmas afternoon. Löwinger had sold only eight when he was pulled in. The only other items in the dossier were search notices relating to her having left home while underage, and a 1934 police data card which clearly states that she had 'no criminal record.' According to the dossier, she had last visited her mother on January 9 with her future husband: 'And we all know who *that* is,' somebody had scribbled in the margin.

As he turned page after page, Hitler became visibly angry. Hurling it back at Göring, he exclaimed: 'Is there nothing I am to be spared?'

Hitler was stunned that Blomberg could have done this to him. Clearly, as Göring now said, the field marshal would have to resign; but who could succeed him? Heinrich Himmler, the all-powerful Reichsführer of the black-uniformed SS, was one candidate. So, of course, was Göring.

First in line, however, was General von Fritsch. In his confidential handwritten notes of these dramatic weeks, which were removed from Potsdam to Moscow in 1945, Fritsch denied any ambition to succeed Blomberg: 'I would have refused such an appointment since, in view of the Party's attitude toward me, the obstacles would have been insuperable.' Hitler had a deep regard for Fritsch – but there was one worrisome skeleton in the cupboard, and it could be ignored no longer. Two years earlier, during the 1936 crisis of Hitler's remilitarisation of the Rhineland, Himmler had shown to him a police dossier linking Fritsch with a homosexual blackmailer. At that time Hitler had refused to look into it, but the allegation obviously festered in his brain. 'At the end of March or early in April [1936],' General von Fritsch was to write three years later, 'I invited the Führer to do the army the honour of becoming Honorary Colonel of the 9th Infantry Regiment at Potsdam. The Führer accepted, and the regiment was to march to Berlin for the purpose on April 20. On April 19 Hossbach [Hitler's adju-

tant] phoned me that the Führer had withdrawn his agreement to become Colonel of the 9th Infantry Regt.' At the time this was a baffling mystery to Fritsch. On Hitler's birthday the next day, he had sent him a telegram from his sickbed at Achterberg: 'The army and I follow you in proud confidence and willing faith along the path you are marking out ahead into the future of Germany.' (On January 18, 1939, Fritsch commented: 'That was absolutely true at that time. Today I haven't any faith at all in the man. How far the army's officer corps has faith in him, I cannot surmise.')

By 1939, of course, he knew why Hitler had withdrawn his acceptance: 'It was in the spring of 1936,' he wrote,

> . . . that Himmler [first] furnished to the Führer the dossier claiming I had been blackmailed. Perhaps that's why the Führer withdrew his agreement to become Colonel. His later explanation that the Party would never understand his becoming Colonel of a regiment wasn't very likely, or at least not acceptable. The following is also possible: Himmler finds out that the Führer wants to become Colonel of 9th Infantry Regt.; he fears this may strengthen the army's influence even more. This he wants to thwart. That rascal Himmler is absolutely capable of such a deed.

As recently as December 1937, while Fritsch was still in Egypt, Himmler had again brought up that dossier, and stressed the security risk involved if Fritsch *was* a homosexual. Hitler had suspected that the Party was just settling scores against Fritsch however, and had demanded its destruction.

Since Fritsch's return Hitler had not seen him except once, on January 15, 1938, when they had a two-hour argument. Fritsch described it thus:

> The Führer angrily began talking about his worries at the spread of anarchist propaganda in the army. I tried in vain to calm him down. I asked for concrete evidence. The Führer said that he did have such material, but he could not give it to me, only to Blomberg. In other words, an open vote of No Confidence in me. I had no intention of leaving it at that. I planned to ask the Führer for his open confidence in me, failing which I would resign. But it never came to that. . .

Now, on January 24, the shoe was on the other foot. Hitler decided to have it out with Fritsch. He told an aide to summon the Wehrmacht adjutant Hossbach by telephone. The colonel was in bed however, and stubbornly

declined to come before next morning. Hitler lay awake until dawn, staring at the ceiling and worrying how to avoid tarnishing his own prestige if this double scandal ever became public.

THE NEXT day, January 25, Göring reported at eleven A.M. that he had seen Keitel and instructed him to have a talk with the unfortunate war minister about his bride. By early afternoon, he had been to see Blomberg himself – he reported – and told him he must resign. Göring related to Hitler that the minister was a broken man.

In Hossbach's presence, Göring now furnished to Hitler the Gestapo dossier on the homosexual link to Fritsch's name in 1936. The folder was evidently a recent reconstruction, containing several carbon copies of interrogations, affidavits, and photostats. A certain blackmailer, Otto Schmidt, had been arrested in 1936 and had then recounted the homosexual exploits of one 'General von Fritsch' as witnessed by himself in November 1933. He had introduced himself as 'Detective Inspector Kröger' and threatened to arrest him. The general had produced an army ID card and blustered, 'I am General von Fritsch.' He had bribed Schmidt with 2,500 marks collected from his bank in the Berlin suburb of Lichterfelde. As Göring contentedly pointed out to Hitler, Schmidt's evidence had proved true in sixty other cases. The dossier, in short, was damning.

Even so, Hitler was uncertain. He ordered Göring to question Otto Schmidt in detail, and he forbade Hossbach to mention the matter to Fritsch. Unfortunately Hossbach that same evening confided, rather incoherently, to Fritsch that allegations had been made about improper behaviour with a young man in November 1933; and this incomplete prior knowledge was to have fateful consequences for Fritsch. He concluded that a certain member of the Hitler Youth was behind the complaint: in 1933 he had arranged for one young Berliner – Fritz Wermelskirch – an apprenticeship at Mercedes-Benz's factory at Marienfelde. The youth had then turned to crime however, and when he bragged to underworld friends that he had a high-ranking benefactor Fritsch had severed all connections with him. That had been three years ago.

The next morning Hossbach admitted to Hitler that he had warned Fritsch: the general had hotly rejected the allegation as 'a stinking lie,' and had added: 'If the Führer wants to get rid of me, one word will suffice and I will resign.' At this, Hitler announced with evident relief, 'Then everything is all right. General von Fritsch can become minister after all.'

During the day, however, rival counsels prevailed. Blomberg was ushered into Hitler's library in plain clothes. He angrily criticised the manner in which he had been dismissed. Then ire gave way to sorrow and Hitler – who genuinely feared that Blomberg might take his own life – tried to console him. He hinted that when Germany's hour came he would like to see Blomberg at his side again. The discussion turned to a successor. Hitler commented, 'Göring has neither the necessary perseverance nor the application.' As for Fritsch, said Hitler, there was some belief that he was a closet homosexual. To this Blomberg evenly replied that he could quite believe it.

Thus the word of the Commander in Chief of the German army came to be tested against the utterances of a convict, his accuser Otto Schmidt, by now aged thirty-one, pale and puffy from years of incarceration. Late on January 26 Fritsch was summoned to the library. He himself wrote this hitherto unpublished account of the famous scene:

> I was eventually called in at about 8:30 P.M. The Führer immediately announced to me that I had been accused of homosexual activities. He said he could understand everything, but he wanted to hear the truth. If I admitted the charges against me, I was to go on a long journey and nothing further would happen to me. Göring also addressed me in similar vein.
>
> I emphatically denied any kind of homosexual activities and asked who had accused me of them. The Führer replied that it made no difference who the accuser was. He wished to know whether there was the slightest basis for these allegations.

Fritsch remembered Wermelskirch. 'Mein Führer,' he replied, 'this can only be a reference to that affair with a Hitler Youth!'

Hitler was dumbfounded by Fritsch's answer. Otto Schmidt, the man in the Gestapo dossier, was no Hitler Youth. Hitler thrust the folder into Fritsch's hands.

The general rapidly scanned it, purpled, and dismissed it all as a complete fabrication. At a signal from Hitler the blackmailer was led in to the library. Schmidt pointed unerringly at the general and exclaimed, 'That's the one.' Fritsch was speechless. He blanched and was led out.

Hossbach urged Hitler to give a hearing to General Ludwig Beck, the Chief of General Staff; but the very telephone call to Beck's home at Lichterfelde stirred fresh suspicions in Hitler's tortured mind: had not the

blackmail money been collected from a bank at Lichterfelde? (He later interrogated Beck about when he had last lent money to his Commander in Chief. The puzzled general could only reply that he had never done so.) Fritsch's own pathetic story continues:

> I gave the Führer my word of honour. Confronted with the allegations of a habitual crook, my word was brushed aside as of no consequence. I was ordered to report to the Gestapo next morning. Deeply shaken at the abruptness displayed by the Führer and Göring toward me, I went home and informed Major [Curt] Siewert [*personal chief of staff*] in brief about the allegations. Soon afterward I also informed General Beck. I mentioned to both that it might be best for me to shoot myself in view of the unheard-of insult from the Führer.

Fritsch demanded a full court-martial to clear his name.

Who should succeed Blomberg now? Goebbels suggested that Hitler himself should do so. Sent for again the next morning, January 27, Blomberg pointed out that since President Hindenburg's death the Führer was constitutionally Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht already. If he appointed no new war minister, then he would have direct control of the armed forces.

'I'll think that over,' replied Hitler. 'If I do that however, then I'll be needing a good Wehrmacht chief of staff.'

'General Keitel,' suggested Blomberg. 'He's done that job for me. He's a hard worker and he knows his stuff.'

As Blomberg, now in plain clothes, left the chancellery for the last time, he noticed that the sentries did not present arms to him.

At one p.m. Hitler received Keitel – a tall, handsome general of unmistakably soldierly bearing although he had been told to come in plain clothes. He had headed the army's organisation branch during the recent expansion. He was a champion of a unified Wehrmacht command. Hitler asked him who ought to succeed Blomberg, and Keitel too offered Göring's name.

'No, that is out of the question,' replied Hitler coolly. 'I don't think Göring has the ability. I shall probably take over Blomberg's job myself.'

He asked Keitel to find him a new Wehrmacht adjutant to replace the disobedient Hossbach. Keitel picked Major Rudolf Schmundt. Hitler – Keitel – Schmundt: the links of the historic Wehrmacht chain of command were coming together. Over the next link, Fritsch's position, that question mark still hung.

As Hitler had ordered, General von Fritsch submitted to Gestapo interrogation that morning, January 27, 1938. Concealed microphones recorded every word, and the 83-page transcript has survived, revealing the drama as the monocled baron was again confronted with the sleazy blackmailer. Schmidt stuck to his filthy story, despite the sternest warnings from Werner Best on the consequences of lying. The general he had seen in 1933 had smoked at least one cigar during the blackmail bargaining. He again described the alleged homosexual act: 'This Bavarian twerp,' referring to the male prostitute Weingärtner, 'was standing up and the man knelt down in front of him and was sucking at it . . .' to which Fritsch could only expostulate, 'How dare he suggest such a thing! That is supposed to have been *me?'* He conducted part of the questioning himself. None of Schmidt's details fitted him – he had not even smoked a cigarette since 1925. He frankly admitted that the evidence seemed damning. 'I must confess that if pressure has been brought to bear on him from some quarter or other to tell a lie, then he's doing it damnably cleverly.'

Two other 'witnesses' had been posted unobtrusively in the Gestapo headquarters where they could see him. Weingärtner, the male prostitute, was emphatic that this was *not* his client of 1933. Bücker, Schmidt's accomplice, detected a certain resemblance, but would not swear to it. Hitler was not informed of this ambivalent outcome. 'If the Führer had only been told of these two facts,' Fritsch later wrote, 'then his decision would surely have been very different, in view of the word of honour I had given him.' 'It's one man's word against another,' observed Goebbels in his diary. 'That of a homosexual blackmailer against the army's commander in chief.' The next day he recorded that although Heydrich had conducted several 'all-night' interrogations, Fritsch was standing up to him.

Hitler, however, had already written off Fritsch. On January 28 he was already discussing a shortlist of possible successors as Commander in Chief, army. His first choice was General Walter von Reichenau – Keitel's predecessor at the war ministry. Keitel advised against him; his own candidate was General Walther von Brauchitsch, a stolid, widely respected officer whose reputation was founded on his period as army commander in East Prussia. In fact Keitel had already telephoned him urgently to take the next train from Dresden; he arrived at a quarter to nine that evening. Next morning Keitel repeated to Hitler the answers given by the general under close questioning; in particular Brauchitsch was willing to tie the army closer to the Nazi state.

Hitler sent for Brauchitsch. Now the general mentioned however that he too had delicate personal difficulties: he wanted a divorce to marry a Frau Charlotte Rüffer, herself a divorcée; his first wife must be settled financially, which he could not afford. Brauchitsch's nomination thus appeared to have foundered.

The jostling for Fritsch's office resumed.

Reichenau was seen haunting the war ministry building. Göring sent his loyal aide Colonel Karl Bodenschatz to drop hints amongst Hitler's adjutants that Göring ought to take over the army too. Admiral Erich Raeder, the navy's Commander in Chief, sent an adjutant to propose the revered but cantankerous General Gerd von Rundstedt as an interim tenant for the job. Hitler rejected all of these contenders. He heaved the weighty Army List volume across the desk to the navy captain and challenged him: 'You suggest one!'

On February 3 Hitler reluctantly declared himself satisfied with Brauchitsch's attitude on the Church, the Party, and military problems, and formally shook hands with him as Fritsch's successor. The unfortunate General von Fritsch was asked that same afternoon by Hitler to submit his resignation. Fritsch wrote later, ' I accepted this demand, as I could never have worked with this man again.'

On February 4 Hitler accordingly signed an icy letter to Fritsch, formally accepting his resignation 'in view of your depleted health.' The letter was published, thus driving the last nail into Fritsch's coffin, as it turned out.

Meanwhile, Hitler had charged Dr. Hans Lammers to negotiate the terms of a financial settlement for the first Frau von Brauchitsch to agree to a noiseless divorce. Eventually the Reich settled an allowance of about 1,300 marks a month on her. Hitler thereby purchased complete moral sway over the army's new Commander in Chief, and for a relatively paltry sum.

Hitler – Keitel – Schmundt – Brauchitsch: the chain of command had gained another link. Hitler decided that Brauchitsch, Göring, and Raeder as the three service Commanders in Chief would take their orders from a new supreme command authority, the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW), with Wilhelm Keitel as its chief of staff. Hitler himself would be Supreme Commander, with the new OKW as his military secretariat.

This OKW would also exercise Blomberg's former ministerial functions. His old National Defence division, the Abteilung Landesverteidigung,

would transfer to the OKW as an operations staff, commanded by Colonel Max von Viebahn, a staff officer of the older generation.

Thus Keitel himself became Hitler's principal military secretary. Hitler never regretted the choice; the general's métier was a willingness to obey. At most Hitler needed an industrious and efficient machine to put his own military policies into effect.

He confided to Keitel that he was planning to do something that would make Europe 'catch its breath.' It would also serve to distract attention from the Wehrmacht's problems. He would carry out a general top-level reshuffle, to give the impression not of a momentary weakness but of a gathering of strength.

IT WAS indeed a minor landslide. Hitler changed his foreign minister and minister of economics; inconvenient diplomats like Ambassador Ulrich von Hassell in Rome were forcibly retired; Göring was promoted to a field marshal, while three score army and Luftwaffe generals who were too old, conservative, or obstinate were axed or transferred; Keitel's younger brother became chief of army personnel.

Most of the dumbfounded victims first learned of these changes when they opened their newspapers the next morning. By February 5, 1938, Hitler knew that his tactics had largely succeeded. The British press lord, Rothermere, telegraphed him, 'May I add, my dear Führer, my congratulations on the salutary changes you have made. Your star rises higher and higher.'

The German army, however, could not be so easily fobbed off. Fritsch's disposal was seen as evidence of the hold that the Party was gaining. At four P.M. on February 5 Hitler delivered to his leading army and Luftwaffe generals, standing around him in a semicircle in the war ministry, a two-hour speech in which he mercilessly recited the allegations that had resulted in the resignations of both Blomberg and Fritsch. He read out the formal legal opinion of the minister of justice, and quoted choice extracts from the Otto Schmidt dossier.

At eight o'clock that evening, Hitler presided over what was, as things turned out, the last Cabinet meeting ever called. He briefly introduced Keitel and Brauchitsch – the former would faithfully administer the Wehrmacht High Command until the end of the coming war in 1945, while the latter proved a complaisant army Commander in Chief only until December 1941, when he and Hitler parted. After the Cabinet meeting, Hitler

set out for his mountainside home in Bavaria – as Führer, Reich Chancellor, and now Supreme Commander of the armed forces in fact as well as name.

'The damage that one woman can do,' exclaimed Goebbels in his diary on February 6. 'And that *kind* of woman too!' Yet if these scandals had proven anything, it was that Adolf Hitler was more deeply in the thrall of his devious henchmen than even he suspected. By early March, when he was back in Berlin, the first whispers were reaching him that he had been misled – the SS had wilfully deceived him, and even Göring might not have been entirely above blame. Hitler evidently ignored the rumours. Fritsch was now lost beyond retrieval; while Himmler, the SS, and Göring were indispensable.

The army investigators began their inquiries in February. Fritsch engaged a gifted barrister, Count Rüdiger von der Goltz. On March 1 Goltz succeeded in establishing that the blackmailer Schmidt had witnessed not Fritsch, but only a cavalry captain of similar name, Achim von *Frisch.* The latter very commendably admitted the felony; to clinch it, he even produced Schmidt's signed receipt for the 2,500 marks that he had been paid. Disturbingly, he also revealed that the Gestapo had investigated his bank account at Lichterfelde as early as January 15. Was it pure coincidence that this was only three days after the Blomberg wedding?

General Walter Heitz, representing the army tribunal, took this startling evidence to Hitler on March 3. Hitler's first impulse was to call off the impending hearing. Heinrich Himmler was present however, and he interjected: 'The Fritsch and the Frisch cases are two entirely different matters. The blackmailer Schmidt has himself identified the general!' To underline this particular point, Achim von Frisch was now also arrested, since he had confessed to homosexual offences.

Hitler ordered the Fritsch trial to begin in secret on March 10. A few days later, Fritsch himself wrote,

> Initially my impression was that Göring [*who presided*] was working toward an open verdict – in other words that my guilt had not been established, but that it was still possible.
>
> The weight of evidence was so great that even Göring had to announce that no reasonable person could fail to be convinced of my innocence. Finally the key witness, the blackmailer, confessed that everything he had said about me was a lie.

During the hearings it came out that on the very eve of the trial the head of the Gestapo's homosexual investigations branch, Kriminalrat Joseph Meisinger, had threatened Schmidt with a sticky end should he recant on his sworn testimony. Fritsch was acquitted.

There is no evidence that Hitler concerned himself in the least with the unbecoming background of this Gestapo intrigue. It was one of Meisinger's officials who had checked the Lichterfelde bank account in January, so Meisinger at least realised the error he had made. Shortly after the trial began, Himmler sent him out of harm's way to Vienna; his career was unimpaired by the blunder.

Not so the career of General von Fritsch. On the day after his acquittal, he wrote to his lawyer: 'Whether and to what extent the Führer will allow me to be rehabilitated still remains to be seen. I fear he will resist it with all his might. Göring's closing remarks would seem to indicate this in part.'

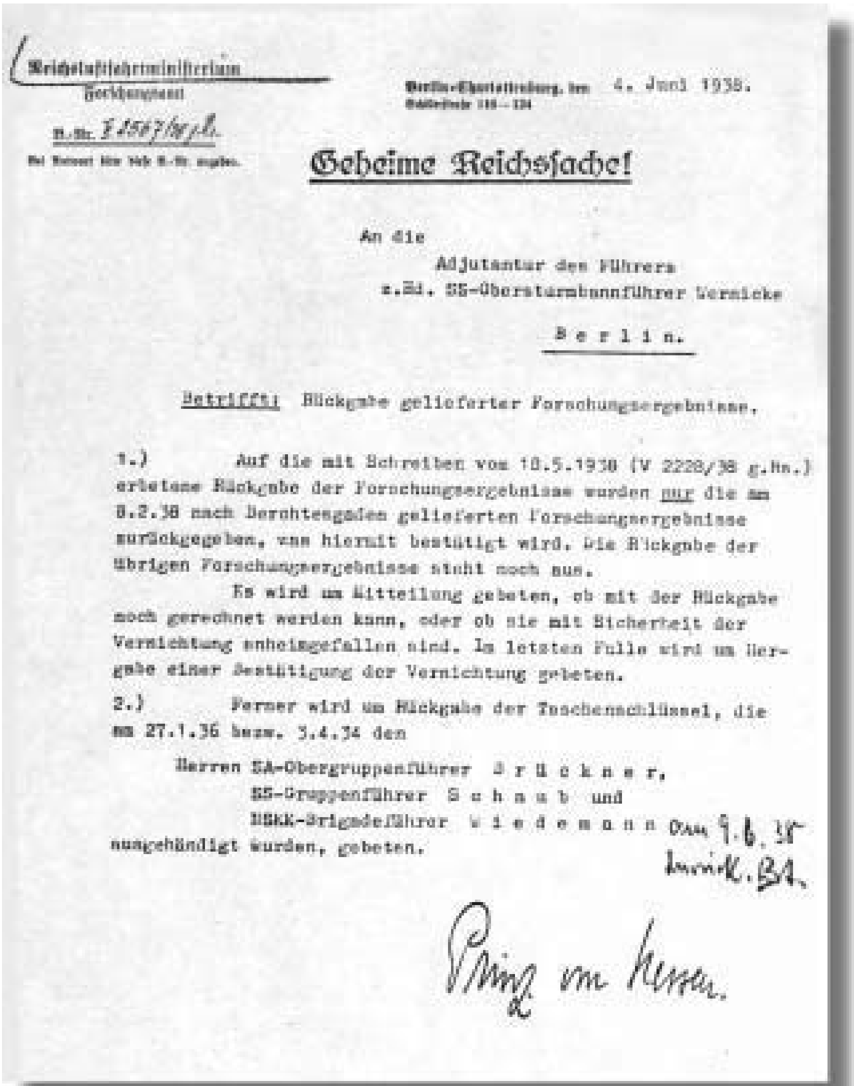
In his private notes, Fritsch recollected:

> Both before the end of the examination of the witnesses and while reading the tribunal's verdict, Göring took pains to justify the Gestapo's actions. . . He admittedly spoke of the tragedy of my plight, but said that under the circumstances it could not be helped. Throughout it all you could hear the leitmotif, 'Thank God we've got rid of him and he can't come back.' Göring kept referring to me with emphasis as 'Colonel General von Fritsch (*retired*).'

Not until Sunday, March 20, could General von Brauchitsch obtain an interview with Hitler to demand Fritsch's rehabilitation. 'The Führer was apparently not entirely opposed to rehabilitating me,' wrote Fritsch later. He drafted a twelve-point list of the facts pointing to a Gestapo intrigue. At the end of March he incorporated them in a letter to Himmler. It ended with the extraordinary words, 'The entire attitude of the Gestapo throughout this affair has proven that its sole concern was to brand me as the guilty party,' and 'I therefore challenge you to a duel with pistols.' He asked first Beck and then Rundstedt to convey the letter to Himmler as his seconds. Both of these stalwarts politely declined.

Under pressure from Brauchitsch, Hitler did take a sheet of his private gold-embossed notepaper and write sympathetically to Fritsch.*

* See picture section for this document.



Reichsluftfahrtministerium
Forschungsamt

B.-Nr. [illegible]

Berlin-Charlottenburg, den 4. Juni 1938.
Schillerstraße 116–124

Geheime Reichssache!

An die
Adjutantur des Führers
z.Hd. SS-Obersturmbannführer Wernicke

Berlin.

Betrifft: Rückgabe gelieferter Forschungsergebnisse.

1.) Auf die mit Schreiben vom 10.5.1938 (V 2228/38 g.Rs.) erbetene Rückgabe der Forschungsergebnisse wurden nur die am 8.2.38 nach Berchtesgaden gelieferten Forschungsergebnisse zurückgegeben, was hiermit bestätigt wird. Die Rückgabe der übrigen Forschungsergebnisse steht noch aus.

Es wird um Mitteilung gebeten, ob mit der Rückgabe noch gerechnet werden kann, oder ob sie mit Sicherheit der Vernichtung anheimgefallen sind. Im letzten Falle wird um Hergabe einer Bestätigung der Vernichtung gebeten.

2.) Ferner wird um Rückgabe der Taschenschlüssel, die am 27.1.36 bzw. 3.4.34 den

Herren SA-Obergruppenführer B r ü c k n e r,
SS-Gruppenführer S c h a u b und
NSKK-Brigadeführer W i e d e m a n n

ausgehändigt wurden, gebeten.

Prinz von Hessen.

Prince Christoph of Hesse, chief of the Forschungsamt, presses for the return of top secret intercepts and the keys to courier-pouches conveying them to Hitler. Equivalent to the modern NSA and GCHQ, the Nazi Forschungsamt is Hitler's indispensable wiretap and code breaking agency. Prince Christoph – brother-in-law of Prince Philip, the later Duke of Edinburgh – will die in a 1943 plane crash (GERMAN FEDERAL ARCHIVES)

The general replied with a pathetic homily about the bond of confidence he had believed to exist between them. Hitler let him know that at the next Reichstag session he would personally speak words of praise for him.

This did not happen, and by June Fritsch had gone so far as to draft an open letter to every senior general revealing the facts of his acquittal; this may have come to Hitler's ears, because all the army and Luftwaffe generals who had heard Hitler's secret Berlin speech on February 5 were ordered to a remote Pomeranian airfield on June 13, ostensibly to witness a Luftwaffe equipment display. At noon Hitler arrived, and then the three-hour judgement and findings in the Fritsch trial were read out to them by the tribunal's president.

After that, with visible embarrassment, Hitler began to speak: 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'I was the victim of a very regrettable error over General von Fritsch.' He asked them to picture his 'mental torment,' caused by the Blomberg affair. In 1936, he said, he had not taken the Schmidt dossier seriously; but after the Blomberg scandal he had believed anything possible. 'The allegations against General von Fritsch were not malicious fabrications,' he insisted. 'A minor official blundered – that's all.' He had ordered the blackmailer to be shot.

More than one general left that airfield with the momentary conviction that Hitler had spoken honestly. Brauchitsch reported the day's events to Fritsch two days later. Hitler appointed him to be Colonel of his old regiment, but this ancient honour did little to heal the injury.

'Either the Führer sees to it that law and order prevail again in Germany,' wrote Fritsch,

> . . . and that people like Himmler and Heydrich get their deserts, or he will continue to cover for the misdeeds of these people – in which case I fear for the future. Since the Führer has sanctioned and condoned the way the Gestapo acted in my case, I must regretfully abandon my plan to challenge Himmler to a duel. Besides, after so much time has elapsed it would probably look somewhat affected.
>
> What I cannot, and never will, understand is the Führer's attitude toward me. Perhaps he personally begrudges me that I dented his aura of infallibility by being acquitted.

Goddess of Fortune

Hitler had returned to the Berghof, high above the little Alpine town of Berchtesgaden, early on February 6, 1938. It was here that he always came when he had to ponder the path ahead.

Ever since he had first been driven up the rough mountain paths on the pillion seat of a motorbike, he had been in love with this Obersalzberg mountainside – a green ridge straddling lakes and pine forests, velvet pastures and dairy herds. Here in the late 1920s he had purchased a cottage with the royalties earned by *Mein Kampf* and articles published under a pseudonym by the Hearst Press and the *New York Times* in America. Around this cottage he had built his Berghof. The air up here was clean and pure. 'Fresh air is the finest form of nourishment,' he would say.

Rudolf Hess, his deputy, described Hitler's everyday routine at the Berghof in a long letter to his mother dated January 15, 1938:

> On his rest days up here the Führer likes to stay up far into the night: he watches a film, then chats – mostly about naval things if I'm there as they interest us both – then reads a while. It's morning before he goes to sleep. At least he doesn't ask to be woken up until 1 or two P.M., in contrast to Berlin where he doesn't get to bed any earlier but is up again after only four or five hours. After a communal lunch he and his guests usually take a stroll of half an hour or more to a tea pavilion built a year ago with a magnificent view over Salzburg. . . It's really cosy sitting at the big open fire at a large circular table which just about fills the equally round building. The illumination is provided by candles on holders around the walls. [Heinrich] Hoffmann [Hitler's photographer] and his missus

> are usually there – he plays the part of the court jester; there's always one of the Führer's doctors, Dr. [Karl] Brandt or Dr. [Werner] Haase, as well as the press chief Dr. [Otto] Dietrich, [adjutants Wilhelm] Brückner, [Julius] Schaub, or [Fritz] Wiedemann; often [Sophie] Stork, whom you know, is up there with Evi Braun and her sister [Gretl]; and sometimes Dr. [Theo] Morell with his wife [Johanna] and Professor [Albert] Speer – Speer is usually up there when new buildings are being planned. After one or two hours up there we walk down for about ten minutes to a group of cross-country vehicles waiting to drive us back down.'

Hitler appointed Martin Bormann, Hess's chief of staff, to manage the Berghof. It was a position that gradually gave Bormann control over Hitler's household too. A former estate manager from Mecklenburg, Bormann was a hard worker and took care that Hitler knew it: he would telephone for a routine invitation to Hitler's luncheon table, then cancel it 'because of the pressure of work.' To the slothful and pleasure-loving soldiers and bureaucrats his love of hard work made Bormann a thoroughly loathsome creature. 'Since 1933 I've worked like a horse,' he wrote to Party officials after Hess's strange defection in 1941. 'Nay, more than a horse – because a horse gets its Sunday and rests at night.'

Hitler's word was Bormann's command. Bormann bought up the adjacent plots of land to preserve the Berghof's privacy. Once Hitler mentioned that a farmstead spoiled his view: when he next looked, it had vanished and the site was levelled and freshly turfed. On June 13, 1937 – a Sunday – Bormann noted in his diary, 'Because of the heat of high summer, the Führer wished there were a tree where the daily "march-past" occurs. I have ordered a tree from Munich.' The lime tree was erected four days later.

Thousands flocked daily to the Berghof to see Hitler in the flesh. 'The Führer is up here at the Obersalzberg now,' wrote his autobahn architect Fritz Todt to a friend. 'On days when he has nothing particular to do he permits anybody who wants to, to come past his garden after lunch at about 2 or three P.M., and he waves to them. It's always a very gay procession up here on the Obersalzberg. . . The folks walk past quietly saluting, and they mustn't shout or anything. Only the children are allowed to hop over to the Führer.'

The main feature of the rebuilt Berghof was the Great Hall, a room over sixty feet long. One entire wall was a panorama window; unprepared visi-

tors walking into the Great Hall gained the momentary, eerie notion that they were looking at an unusually vivid green drapery, until their eyes refocused to infinity and the distant shapes of the trees of the Untersberg mountain were seen.

From the quarries of the Untersberg would later be hewn the red marble slabs with which Hitler would rebuild his Berlin chancellery. Legend had it that in that mountain lay the mediæval emperor Barbarossa – that he would lie there for a thousand years, and that one day he would return when Germany most needed him. In the Great Hall there was an overlong table, surfaced with a red marble slab from across the valley.

On it each morning the adjutants spread out the mail, the newspapers, and the latest dispatches from Berlin. On this same marble slab were later unfolded the maps of Europe and charts of the world's oceans. One 1940 photograph shows the Führer leaning on the maps, surrounded by generals and adjutants. The potted plants have been pushed to the far end of the table, and Schmundt has casually laid his leather document pouch amongst them. Alfred Jodl, Wehrmacht chief of operations, is standing expressionlessly with folded arms in front of a rich tapestry. On the back of the snapshot Jodl himself has pencilled, 'July 31, 1940: Up at the Berghof. The Führer is enlarging on a decision taken shortly before – and it's a good thing that the maps can't be recognised.' The maps are of the Soviet Union.

Days in the Berghof passed with a monotonous sameness, the thick-walled building shrouded in a cathedral-like silence punctuated by the yapping of two Scottish terriers owned by a young woman living anonymously upstairs, or by the laughter of an adjutant's children. Hitler himself slept all morning, while the servants silently cleaned the panelling, or dusted the works of art – here a Tintoretto or Tiepolo, there a small Schwindt. Lunch was presided over by Hitler, with the young woman on his left: the talk revolved around film, theatre, or fashion. The meals were however of puritan simplicity. Earlier in his life, Hitler had eaten meat, but he had suddenly pronounced himself a vegetarian after a suicide tragedy in his town apartment in Munich in 1931 – a fad for which he later offered various excuses: that he had noticed body odours when he ate meat; or that the human jaw was designed for vegetarian meals.

Hitler regaled his Berghof diners with unappetising detail of the various processes he had observed in a slaughter-house, and all the distracting endeavours of the young woman at his side failed to stop him from inflicting this on each new unsuspecting visitor to the Berghof.

After supper, the tapestries in the Great Hall were drawn back and a movie film was shown. Hitler followed this practice nightly until Europe dissolved into war at his command. His appetite for movies was prodigious, but Bormann efficiently submitted weekly lists to the propaganda ministry and asked for certain regular favourites like *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *Mutiny on the Bounty* to be permanently available at the Berghof for the Führer's entertainment.

IT WAS here at the Berghof that Hitler proposed to stage his next coup – a conference with the Austrian chancellor, Kurt Schuschnigg. Relations with Austria were formally governed by a treaty of July 1936. Schuschnigg was autocratic and wilful, and refused to accept the harsh realities of Central European politics. To his friend the police president of Vienna he once admitted that Austria's future was 'of course' inseparable from Germany's – but he was damned if he was going to put up with Berlin dictating his own foreign policy to him.

Such a meeting with Hitler had long been Schuschnigg's dream: he would talk to the Reich Chancellor 'man to man,' he said. Hitler was initially only lukewarm, but he had told his special ambassador in Vienna, Franz von Papen, in the first week in January that the meeting might take place at the end of the month. On the eleventh, at Hitler's New Year diplomatic reception, François-Poncet happened to express a hope that 1938 would not be seeing any of Hitler's 'Saturday surprises' – to which the Nazi foreign minister, Neurath, replied that the internal situation in Austria did give cause for concern.

Over dinner with the Austrian envoy, Stefan Tauschitz, on January 21, Neurath amplified this: 'If a boiler is kept heating, and there's no safety valve, it's bound to explode.' This was a reference to the continued internment of Austrian Nazis, against the spirit of the July 1936 treaty.

On the twenty-second, Vienna learned from Berlin that Göring was secretly boasting that the Reich's difficulties in paying cash for Austrian raw materials would disappear in the spring. On January 26, the very day of the confrontation staged in Hitler's library between General von Fritsch and the blackmailer, Neurath telegraphed from Berlin to Vienna the Führer's proposal that the Berghof meeting should take place on about February 15. Five days later Alfred Jodl's diary quoted Keitel: '[The] Führer wants to switch the spotlight away from the Wehrmacht, make Europe catch its breath. . . Schuschnigg had better not take heart, but tremble.'

TWO DAYS later, on February 2, 1938, Hitler walked across the chancellery garden to the foreign ministry and appointed Joachim von Ribbentrop as the new foreign minister in place of Neurath. He had already told Goebbels of his intention two weeks before; Goebbels warned him that Ribbentrop was a 'zero,' but Hitler saw in him the ideal diplomatic secretary – a loyal henchman who would channel his political directives to the missions abroad. Ribbentrop had few other admirers. One voice, that of an army general (Karl Heinrich von Stülpnagel), summarised the main objections to him:

> Indescribably vain . . . His idea of foreign policy is this: Hitler gives him a drum and tells him to bang it, so he bangs the drum loud and strong. After a while Hitler takes the drum away and hands him a trumpet; and he blows that trumpet until he's told to stop and play a flute instead. Just why he's been banging and tooting and fluting, he never knows and never finds out.

Ribbentrop was four years younger than Hitler. He had served as an officer in a good Prussian regiment. In post-war years he had built up a thriving export-import business in wines and spirits; with his increasing affluence he had bought a villa in Berlin's fashionable Dahlem suburb, and married into the Henkell champagne family.

Hitler regarded this rich newcomer as somebody with influential connections abroad. There is no doubt that he had selected Ribbentrop, until now his London ambassador, to replace Neurath in the forlorn hope that this would flatter opinion in the British capital. He apparently disclosed to him only his more immediate geographical ambitions – Austria, Czechoslovakia, the former German province of Memel seized by Lithuania in 1923, Danzig, and the 'Polish Corridor' (the strip of land linking Poland to the Baltic but separating East Prussia from the rest of Germany). Ribbentrop, for his part, respected Hitler's confidences. He was a gentleman, with a sense of the *korrekt* that sometimes inflated to almost ludicrous proportions. He would decline to discuss with post-war American investigators the details of his August 1939 secret pact with Stalin, since it was still secret, 'as a matter of international courtesy!'

FRANZ VON Papen, Hitler's special envoy to Vienna since 1934, arrived at the Berghof late on February 6, 1938, shortly after Hitler himself. Hitler had recalled him, but now promptly sent him back to Vienna with instruc-

tions to invite the Austrian chancellor to the Berghof on the twelfth. Papen pocketed his pride and did so; over the next few days, he and Schuschnigg discussed what demands each side had to make of the other. Schuschnigg agreed in principle to appoint pro-German ministers of finance and security. Hitler agreed to close down the Nazis' headquarters in Vienna.

For this summit meeting, Hitler set his stage with the care of a Bayreuth producer. The guard barracks on the approach road to the Berghof were filled with 'Austrian Legion' units: there were 120,000 men in the legion, outnumbering Austria's legal army two to one. The SS sentry manning the gate on the final approach growled in unmistakable Carinthian dialect. And as Hitler marched down the steps to meet the half-tracked vehicle bringing Schuschnigg's little group up the icebound lanes, he was accompanied by Reichenau and Luftwaffe general Hugo Sperrle – 'my two most brutal-looking generals,' he later chuckled to his adjutants. He boasted to Goebbels afterwards that he had used 'pretty tough' language to the Austrian chancellor, and had threatened to use force to get his way, saying, 'Guns speak louder than words.'

The Austrian made a bad impression on the prudish Führer. He remarked to his staff that Schuschnigg had not shaved and his fingernails were dirty. The atmosphere of their talks was well-illustrated by Hitler's own May 1942 recollection: 'I won't ever forget how Schuschnigg shrivelled up when I told him to get rid of those silly little barricades facing our frontier, as otherwise I was going to send in a couple of engineer battalions to clear them up for him.' Hitler said he had decided to solve the Austrian problem *so oder so.* His advisers had submitted an alternative, less martial, plan to him. Schuschnigg must sign it too. 'This is the first time in my life I have ever changed my mind,' Hitler said. Schuschnigg put up a stout fight despite the blatant intimidation tactics.

Over lunch, Hitler's generals loudly discoursed on the Luftwaffe and its new bombs, and Hitler talked about his panzer armies of the future. Schuschnigg poked at his food without appetite. Then Hitler subtly changed his tone, and turned with enthusiasm to his plans to rebuild Hamburg with giant skyscrapers bigger than New York's; he sketched the giant bridge that he and Todt were going to throw across the River Elbe – the longest bridge in the world. 'A tunnel would have been cheaper,' he admitted. 'I want Americans arriving in Europe to see for themselves however that anything they can do, we Germans can do better.' He also announced that later in 1938 a new warship was to be launched with the name of *Admiral Tegethoff* –

after the Austrian hero who had sunk the Italian fleet in the Battle of Lissa in 1866. 'I'm going to invite both you as Austrian chancellor and Admiral Horthy to the ceremony,' Hitler promised Schuschnigg. This generated such enthusiasm that when Hitler withdrew after lunch with Ribbentrop – to draw up the document that Schuschnigg must sign – some of the Austrian visitors loudly proclaimed 'Heil Hitler,' to everybody's embarrassment.

This mood changed sharply when Schuschnigg saw the proposed agreement. It required him to appoint Dr. Arthur Seyss-Inquart as minister of security and Dr. Hans Fischböck as minister of finance, to prepare an economic union between Austria and Germany. All imprisoned Nazis were to be amnestied and reinstated. Ribbentrop bluntly told Schuschnigg that these terms were not open to negotiation. A new battle began. It was not a gentle process obtaining Schuschnigg's signature.

At one point Ribbentrop came in and complained: 'Mein Führer, I've reached agreement with him on every point except one: he won't appoint Seyss-Inquart as minister of security.' Hitler retorted, 'Tell him that if he doesn't agree, I'll invade this very hour!' (This was bluff.)

Schuschnigg was insisting on six days' grace, as only President Wilhelm Miklas could appoint new ministers. Hitler called him back into his study and resumed his bluster.

Once he threatened, 'Do you want Austria to become another Spain?' Then he asked Schuschnigg to step outside, and as the door opened he called out into the Great Hall: 'General Keitel!' When Keitel hurried in Hitler motioned him to a chair: 'Just sit there.' This dumb charade lasted for ten minutes before Schuschnigg was called back in. Schuschnigg initialled the final draft of the agreement without further objection. He had withstood Hitler's hypnotic influence for longer than many of the Wehrmacht's most seasoned generals later did. 'I have to admit,' Schuschnigg told a Viennese intimate two days later, 'that there's something of the prophet about Hitler.'

For all Hitler's tough talk, he had no intention of starting a forcible invasion of Austria, provided that Schuschnigg kept his part of the bargain. Hitler told his Luftwaffe adjutant that Austria would draw closer to the Reich of her own accord – perhaps that very autumn of 1938 – unless Schuschnigg committed some *Dummheit* meantime. To deter Schuschnigg from second thoughts, however, he ordered the OKW to fake preparations for an 'invasion'; Vice Admiral Wilhelm Canaris personally arranged this from his Abwehr's regional headquarters in Munich.

AT FIRST these fears seemed groundless. Shortly after Hitler's return to Berlin, he learned on February 15 that President Miklas had fully ratified the Berghof agreement. Hitler was host to the diplomatic corps that evening: the Austrian envoy Stefan Tauschitz reported to Vienna afterward that congratulations were showered on him by Göring, Goebbels, and Hitler himself. Hitler told the diplomats that the 'age of misunderstandings' was over.

It was not long before this tone changed, however. As though on a given signal, the British and French newspapers began printing lurid stories of Hitler's Berghof 'blackmail.' 'The world's press rages,' noted Goebbels, 'and speaks – not entirely unjustly – of rape.' The upshot was that on February 18, 1938, the German air force received its first ever provisional order from Göring to investigate possible operations against London and southern England, in case war with Britain broke out. Ribbentrop's personal Intelligence office, run by Rudolf Likus, learned that once back in Vienna, Schuschnigg and Guido Schmidt had 'recovered their balance' and that they were working to sabotage the Berghof agreement.

Hitler adhered to it – sedulously, one might think. In his next Reichstag speech, on February 20, he praised Schuschnigg. Next day he summoned the radical Austrian Nazi, Joseph Leopold, to Berlin and dismissed him. Hitler informed Leopold's successor that from now on there was to be a different approach toward Austria. To Ribbentrop and five Austrian Nazis on February 1938, he repeated that he had abandoned forever all thought of using force against Austria. Time, he said, was in his favour.

ON MARCH 3 Hitler had received the new American chargé d'affaires, Hugh R. Wilson. In a private letter to President Roosevelt, Wilson remarked upon the 'lack of drama in this exceedingly dramatic figure,' and upon the formality of the occasion. When Wilson had met the ex-saddlemaker President Friedrich Ebert they had munched black bread and quaffed beer together; but Hitler now received him in a stiff dress suit. The Führer was healthier than Wilson had expected – more solid and erect, though pale. The character in the Führer's face, his fine artistic hands, his simplicity, directness, and modesty were the first impressions that Wilson conveyed to Roosevelt.

The same day, March 3, saw the long-announced new British initiative. The offer was brought from London by the ambassador Sir Nevile Henderson. Chamberlain himself had explained it to the Cabinet's foreign policy committee on January 24, as a deal whereby Nazi Germany 'would

be brought into the arrangement by becoming one of the African Colonial Powers.' In return, Germany would be expected to limit her armaments and to recognise the status quo in Europe.

Hitler listened to the ambassador's ten-minute speech with a scowl, then launched into a ferocious thirty-minute reply: nothing could be done until the current press campaign against him in England ceased. Nor was he going to tolerate the interference of third parties in Central Europe. He refused to consider unilaterally limiting armaments, so long as the Soviet Union's rearmament continued unchecked. Henderson patiently outlined the colonies offered, on the globe in Hitler's study. Hitler asked what was so difficult about simply giving back the African colonies 'robbed' from Germany after the World War.

Hitler asked Ribbentrop to return to London to take formal leave as ambassador – an act of calculated blandishment – and instructed him to find out whether Chamberlain seriously desired entente. Hitler's more general instructions to him were reflected by Ribbentrop's remarks to Baron Ernst von Weizsäcker on March 5, when he invited him to become his new state secretary. Ribbentrop talked of

> a 'grand program' that cannot be accomplished without the Sword. It will therefore take three or four more years before we are ready. . . Where exactly the fighting will be, and wherefore, is open to later discussion.
>
> If at all possible, Austria is to be finished off [*liquidiert*] before 1938 is out.

In Berlin, Hitler found army opinion still unsettled by the creation of the OKW. There were sounds of distant thunder.

The General Staff submitted its opinion on March 7, 1938. General Walther von Brauchitsch, Commander in Chief, signed the memorandum, which had been drafted by General Ludwig Beck, together with his deputy Erich von Manstein. Their proposal was that the army should have predominance in any Wehrmacht command. Viewed in the subsequent light of a world war waged largely by the strategic bomber and the submarine, Beck's memorandum was a dismal disappointment. In part it gratuitously insulted Hitler. In bygone times, the document conceded, any monarch could be a warlord if he chose – Frederick the Great and Napoleon were examples; but now 'even a genius' could not manage both political and

military leadership. Beck rightly argued that there were two quite distinct functions in a war – the organisation of the domestic war economy by a 'Reich Secretary for War,' and the conduct of strategic operations by a 'Reich Chief of General Staff.' Inasmuch as the balance of future wars would lie in the army's hands, clearly the army should provide that strategic leadership.

> The more there comes to the fore a war in the east, which will be a matter of the conquest of territory . . . the more it becomes obvious that ultimately the success of the army will decide between the victory or defeat of the nation in that war.
>
> A further factor is that, of our eastern enemies, Russia and Poland cannot be mortally injured at sea or in the air; and even if Czechoslovakia's cities and industrial centres are destroyed, she can only be forced at most to surrender certain territories, but not to surrender her sovereignty completely.

The document argued that the navy and Luftwaffe would be confined to primarily defensive roles – to 'keeping the sea-lanes open' and 'defence of the homeland.' The possibilities of extended cruiser warfare, of the submarine campaign, of operations like the seaborne invasion of Holland, of the bombardment of Belgrade and the destruction of the Polish, French, and Russian air forces were not even contemplated by Beck.

Hitler told his adjutants that the document was calling for the precise opposite of what he had ordered on February 4. 'If the army had had any say in it,' he later reminded Major Rudolf Schmundt, 'the Rhineland would still not be free today; nor would we have reintroduced conscription; nor concluded the naval agreement; nor entered Austria.'

'NOR ENTERED Austria': toward midday on March 9, 1938, Hitler heard rumours that Schuschnigg was to spring a snap plebiscite on Austria's future. This was the *Dummheit* that Hitler had been waiting for. The plebiscite's one question had been so formulated that any Austrian voting 'No' to it could be charged with high treason (since voters had to state their names and addresses on the ballot papers). Some of his ministers felt the voting age should be eighteen, with only his Party members allowed to vote; others recalled that the constitution defined the voting age as twenty-one, but Schuschnigg arbitrarily raised it for the plebiscite to twenty-four – the Nazis being primarily a Party of youth – and stipulated that votes were to be

handed to his own Party officials, not the usual polling stations. Even if one of the printed 'Yes' ballot papers were to be crossed out and marked with a large 'No' it would still count as a 'Yes.' There were no 'No' ballot papers.

Hitler flew his agent Keppler to Vienna with instructions to prevent the plebiscite, or failing that to insist on a supplementary question sounding the Austrian public on its attitude toward union with the Reich. That evening Schuschnigg formally announced the plebiscite. Hitler listened to the broadcast from Innsbruck, then pounded the table with his fist and exclaimed, 'It's got to be done – and done now!' A month later he announced, 'When Herr Schuschnigg breached the Agreement on March 9, at that moment I felt that the call of Providence had come.'

Toward midnight Hitler mustered his principal henchmen Göring, Goebbels, and Bormann at the chancellery and told them that by calling his 'stupid and crass plebiscite' Schuschnigg was trying to outsmart them. He proposed therefore to force his own solution on Austria now. Goebbels suggested they send a thousand planes to drop leaflets over Austria, and then 'actively intervene.' Ribbentrop's private secretary Reinhard Spitzy was rushed to London with a letter asking the new Nazi foreign minister to assess immediately what Britain's probable reaction would be.

Hitler sat up with Goebbels and the others until five A.M. plotting. 'He believes the hour has come,' recorded Goebbels. 'Just wants to sleep on it. Says that Italy and Britain won't do anything.' The main worry was Austria's powerful neighbours and friends. Hitler took great pains drafting a letter the next day to Mussolini, begging his approval. (The complete text, found seven years later in Göring's desk, shows Hitler not only justifying his entry into Austria but also making plain that his next move would be against Czechoslovakia.) In his diary Alfred Jodl was to note, 'Italy is the most ticklish problem: if she doesn't act against us, then the others won't either.'

By ten A.M. on March 10, when Keitel was summoned to the chancellery, Hitler had provisionally decided to invade Austria two days later. 'There's always been something about March,' wrote a jubilant Goebbels. 'It has been the Führer's lucky month so far.' Neurath, well pleased to have Hitler's ear again in Ribbentrop's absence, also advised a rapid grab at Austria. Keitel sent back a messenger to the Wehrmacht headquarters to fetch their operation plans. Despite Blomberg's explicit directive of June 1937 however there were none, except for 'Otto.' Keitel meanwhile went to fetch General Beck, and asked him what plans the General Staff had made for invading Austria. Beck gasped, 'None at all!' He repeated this to Hitler

when they got back to the chancellery. The most he could mobilise would be two corps. Beck primly declaimed: 'I cannot take any responsibility for an invasion of Austria.'

Hitler retorted, '*You* don't have to. If you stall over this, I'll have the invasion carried out by my SS. They will march in with bands playing. Is that what the army wants?' Beck bitterly reflected, in a letter to Hossbach in October, that this was his first and last military conference with Hitler, and it had lasted just five minutes.

The Luftwaffe raised none of these obstacles. Göring immediately made 300 aircraft available for propaganda flights. Diplomatic officials also moved fast, as Weizsäcker's diary shows:

> 6:30 P.M., hear from Neurath that we're to invade on March 12 . . . Above all I insist that we rig internal events in Austria in such a way that we are requested *from there* to come in, to get off on the right foot historically. It seems a new idea to Neurath, but he'll implant it in the Reich chancellery.

At about eight P.M. the Austrian Nazi Odilo Globocnik – of whom, more later – arrived at the chancellery. He convinced Neurath to suggest to Hitler that Seyss-Inquart should telegraph an 'appeal' for German intervention to Berlin. Hitler, Göring, and Goebbels drafted a suitable text. The telegram (which Seyss-Inquart never even saw) appealed to Hitler to send in troops to restore order because of unrest, murder, and bloodshed in Vienna.

Over dinner in his villa, Göring handed the draft telegram to the Austrian general Glaise-Horstenau to take back to Vienna. Hitler had already given the general a veiled ultimatum for Seyss-Inquart to hand to Schuschnigg himself. At two A.M. he issued the directive for the Wehrmacht operation, 'to restore constitutional conditions' in Austria. 'I myself will take charge of the whole operation. . .'

Evidently Hitler did not sleep much that night. When Reinhard Spitzy flew back from London, arriving at four A.M. (Hitler had himself telephoned him, using a code name, the evening before), Hitler offered him breakfast and read Ribbentrop's verdict on Britain's likely response to the invasion – 'I am basically convinced,' the minister had written, 'that for the present Britain won't start anything against us, but will act to reassure the other powers.'

That morning, March 11, Goebbels's chief propagandist Alfred-Ingemar Berndt confidentially briefed Berlin press representatives: 'Rather more emphasis is to be put on the events in Austria today – the tabloid newspapers are to make headlines of them, the political journals are to run about two columns. You are to avoid too much uniformity.'

Brauchitsch conferred at the chancellery for most of the day. When General Heinz Guderian asked if he could deck out his tanks with flags and flowers to emphasise the 'peaceful' nature of their operation, Hitler agreed wholeheartedly. The telephone lines between Berlin and Vienna buzzed with all the plotting. A failure at the chancellery telephone exchange even obliged Hitler and Göring to conduct their conversations from a phone booth in the conservatory.

Hitler's special agent, Wilhelm Keppler, was keeping a weather eye on Seyss-Inquart in Vienna now, to ensure that this vacillating and over-legalistic Nazi minister did just as the Führer told him. For several hours beyond the deadline set by Hitler in his ultimatum, Schuschnigg procrastinated. From the phone booth Göring's voice could be heard shouting orders to his agents in Vienna. Göring's task was to ensure that Schuschnigg resigned before nightfall. Schuschnigg did at last postpone the plebiscite, but – after discussing this with Hitler – Göring phoned Seyss-Inquart to say that the Führer wanted clear information by 5:30 P.M. as to whether or not President Miklas had invited Seyss-Inquart to form the new Cabinet. Seyss-Inquart expressed the pious hope that Austria would remain independent even if National Socialist in character. Göring gave him a noncommittal reply.

Five-thirty came and went. Göring ordered Seyss-Inquart and the military attaché, General Wolfgang Muff, to visit the president: 'Tell him we are not joking. . . If Miklas hasn't grasped that in four hours, then tell him he's got four minutes to grasp it now.' To this Seyss-Inquart weakly replied, 'Oh, well.' At eight P.M. he again came on the phone from Vienna: nobody had resigned, and the Schuschnigg government had merely 'withdrawn,' leaving events in limbo.

For half an hour there was agitated discussion in the chancellery of this irregular position, with Göring in favour now of military intervention, and Hitler a passive, pensive listener. Then, as they slouched back from the phone booth to the conference room, Hitler slapped his thigh, looked up, and announced: *'Jetzt geht's los – voran!'* ('Okay, let's roll – move!')

At about 8:30 P.M. Hitler signed the executive order. The invasion would commence the next morning.

Soon afterward, at 8:48 P.M., Keppler telephoned from Vienna that Miklas had dissolved the government and ordered the Austrian army not to resist. By ten P.M. the all-important telegram – signed 'Seyss-Inquart' – had also arrived, appealing on behalf of the provisional Austrian government for German troops to restore order. By 10:30 P.M. Hitler also knew that even Mussolini would look benignly on a German occupation of Austria. Hitler hysterically besought his special emissary in Rome over the phone: 'Tell Mussolini I shall never forget him for this! . . . Never, never, never! Come what may!' And, 'Once this Austrian affair is over and done with, I am willing to go through thick and thin with him.'

As he replaced the telephone, Hitler confessed to Göring that this was the happiest day of his life. For the first time in over a decade he could return to his native Austria and visit the grave of his parents at Leonding.

HITLER TOLD his adjutant Brückner to ensure that Ribbentrop stayed on in London as a 'lightning rod' for at least two or three more days. He himself would be in Vienna, if all went well, when he next saw Ribbentrop. Neurath blanched when he heard this, and begged Hitler not to risk Vienna yet – Braunau, his birthplace, perhaps, but not Vienna. Hitler insisted, and ordered absolute secrecy.

For the first time in two days he retired. Neither he nor Keitel however was allowed much slumber, as apprehensive generals and diplomats telephoned frantic appeals to him to call off the operation 'before blood flowed.' Brauchitsch and Beck repeatedly phoned Keitel and Weizsäcker that night, begging them to intervene. The OKW chief of operations, General Max von Viebahn, bombarded Keitel with phone calls, and at two A.M. Viebahn willingly connected General Muff, the military attaché, to Hitler's bedside phone. Viebahn suffered a nervous breakdown the next morning and barricaded himself into an office at the war ministry, where he hurled ink bottles at the door, like some military Martin Luther. (Jodl succeeded him.)

Once again, it was a Saturday. At six A.M. that day, March 12, Hitler departed from Berlin by plane. At the Munich operations post of General Fedor von Bock he was briefed on the operation so far. Wildly cheering crowds had greeted the German 'invaders'; Austrian troops and the veterans of the World War were lining the highways, saluting and proudly displaying the long-forgotten medals on their breasts. Czechoslovakia did not bestir herself. Indeed, as Hitler sardonically commented to the profusely weeping general seated beside him – Franz Halder – Czechoslovakia seemed

suddenly very anxious to oblige him. He crossed the frontier near Braunau at about four o'clock and drove on, standing erect in the front of his open Mercedes, saluting or waving as his driver Erich Kempka changed down through the gears to avoid running down the hysterical crowds pressing into their path. It was dusk by the time they reached Linz, packed with a million clamouring Austrians. From the city hall's balcony he spoke to the crowds: 'If Providence once sent me out from this fine city, and called upon me to lead the Reich, then surely it must have had some mission in mind for me. And that can only have been one mission – to return my beloved native country to the German Reich!'

On the following afternoon he drove out to Leonding where his parents lay – and still lie – buried. By the time he returned to his hotel an idea which had occurred to him during the night had taken more definite shape: originally he had envisaged an autonomous Austria under his own elected presidency; but could he not now afford to proclaim Austria's outright union with the Reich, i.e., the Anschluss? The Austrian public obviously supported him overwhelmingly. He sent a messenger by air to Göring, asking his opinion, and he telephoned Keppler in Vienna to ask Seyss-Inquart to put the idea to his Cabinet at once. When these latter two arrived that evening they confirmed that the Austrian Cabinet agreed to the Anschluss with the Reich. Thus was Hitler's decision taken. 'There is but one moment when the Goddess of Fortune wafts by,' he reminded his adjutants. 'And if you don't grab her by the hem, you won't get a second chance.'

We need not follow Hitler's triumphal progress the next day onward to Vienna. Cardinal Theodor Innitzer, Archbishop of that city, had telephoned him seeking permission to ring all the church bells in Austria to welcome him, and he asked for swastika banners to decorate the steeples as Hitler drove into the capital. At two P.M. on March 15 he took the salute at a great military parade at the Maria-Theresa monument. Wehrmacht troops marched past together with Austrian regiments, garlanded alike with flowers and flags. A thousand bombers and fighters of the two air forces – led by one German and one Austrian officer – thundered over the capital's rooftops. Baron von Weizsäcker, who had arrived with Ribbentrop, wrote that day: 'Which of us does not recall that oft-repeated question of earlier years: What did our World War sacrifices avail us?'

Here was the answer. The whole city was wild with frenetic acclaim. They were seeing the rebirth of German greatness, of a nation defeated despite bloody self-sacrifice, dismembered in armistice, humiliated, crip-

pled by international debt and yet once again arising in the heart of Europe – a nation united by one of their humblest children, a leader promising them an era of greatness and prosperity.

As darkness fell upon Vienna, now a mere provincial capital, Hitler fastened himself into the seat of his Junkers plane – sitting left of the aisle. They flew toward the sunset, the craggy Alpine skyline tinged with ever-changing hues of scarlet and gold. General Keitel was looking out over Bohemia and Moravia, to his right. With tears in his eyes, Hitler called his attention to Austria, on his side of the plane. 'All that is now German again!'

After a while he leaned across the gangway again. Keitel's adjutant, sitting behind them, saw Hitler show a crumpled newspaper clipping that he had been clutching ever since leaving Vienna. It was a sketch map of the Reich's new frontiers. Czechoslovakia was now enclosed on three sides. Hitler superimposed his left hand on the map, so that his forefinger and thumb encompassed Czechoslovakia's frontiers. He winked broadly at the OKW general, and slowly pinched finger and thumb together.



Hitler campaigning in Vienna, April 1938 (AUTHOR'S COLLECTION)

'Green'

This was the beginning of Hitler's new-style diplomacy. On each occasion from now on he satisfied himself that the western powers would not fight provided he made each territorial claim sound reasonable enough. When General Walther von Brauchitsch had proposed to him on March 9, 1938, the strengthening of their defences along the Moselle and Rhine rivers by early 1939, Hitler had seen no need for any urgency. He was to explain, in a secret speech to Nazi editors on November 10, 'The general world situation seemed more favourable than ever before for us to stake our claims.'

March 17 saw Hitler with his chief engineer Fritz Todt unrolling maps and sketching in the new autobahns for Austria. 'Astounding, the fresh plans he is already hatching,' recorded Goebbels afterwards. Hitler's next victim, as he had indicated to Mussolini, would be Czechoslovakia. Through Intelligence channels Prague indicated a willingness to seek a solution to the problem of the Germans living in the Sudeten territories just inside her frontiers. Hitler had however no desire to adopt any solution that the Czechs might propose. On March 19 he conferred with Nazi party leaders, including Dr. Goebbels, whom he invited upstairs to his little study in the chancellery. Over an unfurled map of Europe they plotted their next moves. The Führer confirmed that Czechoslovakia would be next: 'We'll share that with the Poles and Hungarians,' recorded Goebbels in his extraordinary diary afterwards: 'And without further ado.'

That same day the propaganda minister issued a secret circular to Nazi editors to use the word *Grossdeutsch* – Greater German – only sparingly as yet. 'Obviously other territories belong to the actual Grossdeutsches Reich and claim will be laid to them in due course.' How stirring it was, reflected Goebbels in the privacy of his diary, to hear the Führer say that his one

desire was to live to see with his own eyes 'this great German, Teutonic Reich.'

Hitler announced his plan to allow Germany and Austria to vote on April 10 to confirm the Anschluss. The election campaign took him the length and breadth of both countries. On the seventh he had turned the first spade's depth of a new autobahn system in Austria. His surgeon Hanskarl von Hasselbach later wrote: 'The people lined both sides of the roads for mile after mile, wild with indescribable rejoicing. Many of the public wept openly at the sight of Hitler.' After speaking from the balcony of Vienna's city hall on April 9, he took the overnight train to Berlin. As they passed through Leipzig he remarked to Goebbels that he was working on a plan to ship all of Europe's Jews off to the Indian Ocean island of Madagascar. True, the island concerned was a French dominion, but an hour later he explained that one day he was going to settle France's hash too – 'His life's burning ambition,' Goebbels perceived. Both men voted at a booth on the Berlin railroad station concourse. The question on the ballot paper was: 'Do you accept Adolf Hitler as our Führer, and do you thus accept the reunification of Austria with the German Reich as effected on March 13, 1938?' The result staggered even Hitler. Of 49, 493,028 entitled to vote, 49,279,104 had done so; and of these 48,751,857 adults (99.08 percent) had stated their support of Hitler's action. This was an unanimity of almost embarrassing dimensions.

Hitler had told Goebbels that he would put the former Chancellor Schuschnigg on trial, but that he would of course commute any resulting death sentence. There was however no trial; instead he instructed Ribbentrop that Schuschnigg was to be well-treated and housed in a quiet villa somewhere. In later years – like so many other Hitler directives – this came to be overlooked, and Schuschnigg went into a concentration camp from which he was liberated only in 1945.

ON MARCH 24, 1938 Hitler again discussed the next moves with Ribbentrop and Goebbels. He would one day adjust Germany's frontier with France, but he proposed to leave their frontier with Italy unchanged. 'He particularly does not want to reach the Adriatic,' observed Goebbels. 'Our ocean lies to the North and East. A country cannot throw its weight in two directions at once.'

Almost immediately Hitler started subversive activities in the Sudeten territories. On the afternoon of March 28 he discussed tactics with Konrad

Henlein, the leader of the Sudeten German Party. Henlein had been 'discovered' by Canaris in 1935 and schooled by the Abwehr in subversive operations. Since then he had built up a powerful political organisation amongst the 3,200,000 Sudeten Germans. Conferring with him in top secret together with Ribbentrop and SS-Gruppenführer Werner Lorenz, Hitler gave him two missions: the first was to formulate a series of demands on the Czechs of such a character that, though ostensibly quite reasonable, there was no danger that the Czech leader, Dr. Eduard Beneš, would actually entertain them; the second was to use the influence that Henlein had evidently built up in London to prevail upon the British not to interfere.

Military preparations began simultaneously. On the same day, March 28, Keitel signed an important instruction to the army and air force to modernise the main bridges across the Danube and the highways in Austria leading toward Czechoslovakia. On April 1 the General Staff telephoned General Wilhelm von Leeb orders to report to Beck: Leeb would command the Seventh Army which would operate from Austrian soil against Czechoslovakia.

General Beck's own hostility to the Czechs was well-known. Manstein, in a letter of July 21, had written of Beck's 'fierce yearning' for the destruction of Czechoslovakia. In December 1937 Beck had referred to her, in conversation with Jenö Rátz, the Hungarian chief of general staff, as an appendix on German soil: 'As long as she exists, Germany can't fight any war.' He felt however that Czechoslovakia was impregnable to military assault.

Beck seemed unaware that modern states were vulnerable to attack by other means, that the army was only one weapon in Hitler's arsenal. Hitler and the OKW, however, saw their future campaigns not just in terms of cannon and gunpowder. Unlike his generals, Hitler knew many of the cards that his opponents held. Göring's Forschungsamt and Ribbentrop's Pers-Z code-breakers were regularly reading the telegrams between London, Paris, and their missions abroad as well as the cypher dispatches from the Italian and Hungarian diplomats in Berlin. Many a Hitler decision that infuriated his generals by its seeming lack of logic at the time can be explained by his illicit knowledge of his opponents' plans.

Germany's ties with Fascist Italy were now a fact, and Hitler hoped to sign a formal treaty with Mussolini during his forthcoming state visit to Italy. On April 2, seeing off Hans-George von Mackensen as his new ambassador to Rome, he once more said that he had decided to write off the disputed

South Tyrol frontier region in Italy's favour – Germany's frontiers with Italy, Yugoslavia, and Hungary were permanent. 'Our aspirations,' said Hitler, echoing what he had told Ribbentrop and Goebbels, 'are to the north. After the Sudeten Germans our sights will be set on the Baltic. We must turn our interest to the Polish Corridor and, perhaps, the other Baltic states. Not that we want any non-Germans in our domain – but if rule any we must, then the Baltic countries.'

Weizsäcker recorded these words. He also noted that Hitler had told Neurath on April 20, his birthday, that foreign triumphs were now coming in thick and fast. He would bide his time, prepare, then strike like lightning.

Hitler dared not risk settling the Czech affair until he was sure of Mussolini's support. If, in Rome, Mussolini told him in confidence that he was planning to extend his African empire, then Hitler could demand Italian support over Czechoslovakia as the price for German support in Africa. And then, as he once ruminated to Schmundt during April, 'I'll return from Rome with Czechoslovakia in the bag.'

On April 21 he instructed Keitel to draft a suitable OKW directive. The tactical ideal would be a surprise invasion, but world opinion would rule that out unless, for instance, some anti-German outrage occurred there like the murder of their envoy in Prague. The German army and air force must strike simultaneously, leaving Czechoslovakia isolated and demoralised, while German armour poured ruthlessly through Pilsen toward Prague. In four days this main battle must be over.

The next day Hitler sent for the Hungarian envoy Döme Sztójay, and confided to him that in the coming carving up of Czechoslovakia it would be up to Hungary to recover the territory she had lost there after the World War, including 'Hungary's old coronation city,' Bratislava (Pressburg). Sztójay reported this splendid news to his foreign minister Kolomán von Kánya in a secret handwritten letter.

THE BIG military parade marking Hitler's forty-ninth birthday had reminded him that his years were drawing on. An adjutant heard him remark for the first time that his acuity of decision was now at its peak. Moreover an assassin's bullet might always cut him down. On April 23, 1938, he signed a secret decree confirming Göring as his successor. On May 2 Hitler wrote out in longhand a private testament, a rare documentary glimpse of him as a human being, putting his affairs in order, arranging his own funeral and disposing of his personal effects to his family and private staff.

The entire Reich government assembled at the Anhalt station in Berlin to bid him farewell for Rome that day. The last time he had seen Italy, in 1934, the Italians had consigned him to a hot palazzo in Venice with windows that could not be opened and myriads of mosquitoes. In his bedchamber he had clambered onto a chair to unscrew each scalding light bulb in the chandelier. This time however, in May 1938, Mussolini had provided a lavish reception.

For a week in Italy, Hitler could survey the Roman scene and weigh the powers of the Duce against the prerogatives of the King. As his special train hauled into Rome's suburbs on May 3, he marshalled his private staff and warned them not to burst out laughing at the sight of a diminutive figure kneeling on the platform, weighed down with gold braid: for that was the king of Italy, and he was not kneeling – that was his full height. Yet there was no escaping the tiny King Victor Emanuel III, for technically he was Hitler's host. The royal camarilla could not have angered him more had they actually conspired to humiliate Hitler, this humble son of a Braunau customs official. The gates of the king's villa were accidentally locked in his face, and at the palace Hitler encountered suffocating royal etiquette for the first time. The noble Italian chief of protocol led the German guests up the long, shallow flight of stairs, striking every tread solemnly with a gold-encrusted staff. Hitler, the nervous foreign visitor, fell out of step, found himself gaining on the uniformed nobleman ahead, and stopped abruptly, causing confusion and clatter on the steps behind, then started again, walking more quickly until he was soon alongside the Italian again. The latter affected not to notice him, but perceptibly quickened his own pace, until the whole throng was trotting up the last few stairs in an undignified gallop.

There were other flaws. Hitler had proposed giving Italy a planetarium. Ribbentrop pointed out that Italy already had two, both robbed from Germany as post-war reparations. 'It would seem to me, therefore,' Ribbentrop observed in a note, 'that the gift of a planetarium to Mussolini might be somewhat out of place.' At a *Dopolavoro* display only three gilded chairs were provided for the royal couple, Hitler, and Mussolini; inevitably the two dictators had to stand, leaving the third chair empty, while a hundred thousand chuckling Italians looked on. At a concert at the Villa Borghese, the nobility occupied the front rows while the soldiers Rodolfo Graziani, Italo Balbo, and Pietro Badoglio were crowded back into insignificance. This was repeated at the military parade at Naples. Hitler boorishly remarked out loud that these were the generals who had brought the king his

Abyssinian empire; at which the row behind him melted away until the generals were in front. Later, Wiedemann subsequently testified, Hitler petulantly announced to Mussolini: 'I'm going home, I didn't come to see the King, but you, my friend!'

He returned to Berlin on May 10 with mixed impressions. His worst fears of Italy's military worth were confirmed. In German eyes the Duce's most modern weaponry, proudly paraded in Rome, was already obsolete. Hitler was aghast at Mussolini's ignorance of military technology – he would be at the mercy of his generals, he said, and they had sworn their allegiance to the king.

The Italians ducked out of signing the draft alliance that Ribbentrop had taken with him, and in Weizsäcker's words, 'dealt us a slap in the face with an improvised draft treaty of their own, more akin to an armistice with an enemy than a bond of loyalty signed between friends.' Hitler had two long secret talks with the Duce on May 4, and had told him of his ambitions in the east. 'Over Czechoslovakia,' Goebbels noted later that day, quoting Hitler, 'Mussolini has given us a totally free hand.' Mussolini affirmed that in any conflict between Germany and Czechoslovakia he would stand aside, 'his sword in its scabbard.' The phrase seemed ambiguous, but Keitel's adjutant recorded Hitler's words at a secret speech to generals on August 15, 1938: 'What will Italy's position be? I have received reassurances [visit to Italy]. Nobody's going to attack us!' Unhappily, no full record exists of the pregnant remarks that Hitler evidently uttered to Benito Mussolini aboard the battleship *Conte Cavour.* Mussolini recalled him as saying that 'Germany will step out along the ancient Teutonic path, toward the east.'

The upshot of Hitler's visit to Rome had been to discredit monarchies in his eyes for all time. To his intimates, he had in earlier years hinted that he would one day retire and pass supreme command to a contender of royal blood. He would then live his last years as a pensioner in Munich, Regensburg, or Linz, dictating the third volume of his memoirs to Fräulein Johanna Wolf, the more elderly of his secretaries. He had in fact discussed with the late President Hindenburg his plan to restore a Hohenzollern to the throne – not so much the Crown Prince, Friedrich Wilhelm, as one of the prince's sons instead.

What Hitler had seen in Rome however put all thought of that out of his head. On his return to Berlin, he had Göring contact the former Social Democrat leaders like Carl Severing, Gustav Noske, Otto Braun, and Paul

Löbe and *increase* their pensions – in recognition of their having dispensed with the monarchy. Nonetheless, he sent routine birthday greetings on May 6 to Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm. The prince replied with congratulations for Hitler's contribution to peace in Europe. Hitler dourly remarked to Wiedemann, 'I'm not here to ensure peace in Europe; I'm here to make Germany great again. If that can be done peacefully, well and good. If not, we'll have to do it differently.'

HITLER HAD evidently decided not to wait over Czechoslovakia. Weizsäcker recorded on May 13, 'He's thinking of dealing with the Sudeten German problem before the year is out, as the present balance of power [*Konstellation*] might otherwise shift against us.' A cunning propaganda campaign was worked out, beginning with deliberate silence on the dispute. Goebbels briefed the Nazi editors on the thirteenth: 'You are again reminded that you are not allowed to report minor incidents in Czechoslovakia.' There was a *psychological* battle to be won.

Meanwhile, Hitler applied his mind to the supposedly impregnable Czech frontier defences. The OKW advised him that the fortifications were formidable – there were big gun-sites, proof against all known calibres of artillery, at hundred-yard intervals, and machine-gun bunkers in between. Hitler decided that the attack would have to come from *within* the fortifications simultaneously with the main invasion from without. This would be followed by a rapid armoured penetration into Czechoslovakia, while the Luftwaffe bombers struck at Prague.

The foreign line-up against him was now much clearer. Britain was the biggest worry. His agents in Vienna had captured papers revealing the extent to which the British envoy there had egged Schuschnigg on against Hitler. Britain's links with France and the United States were growing stronger: from diplomatic sources Hitler was aware of the Anglo-French staff talks in London – a decoded telegram of the U.S. ambassador in London, Joseph Kennedy, reached Hitler early in May indicating that while Britain was prepared to force the Czechs to accept some of Hitler's terms, he would not be given a free hand in Central Europe. After a joint conference with the navy on May 4, the Luftwaffe's deputy chief of operations, Colonel Hans Jeschonnek, wrote: 'The general political situation has radically changed recently, with Britain emerging increasingly as Germany's principal enemy.' The Führer had already stated quite plainly to Raeder in January 1938, for instance, 'The Führer's impression is that the naval con-

struction program is not progressing fast enough. He compares the naval construction effort with the Luftwaffe's dynamic advance and with the energy with which Field Marshal Göring intervenes and spurs all his factories on.' The yards lacked skilled labour, welders, and materials however, and Raeder pointed to the reckless increase in public construction projects competing with the rearmament program – the Volkswagen works, the Munich subway, the reconstruction of Berlin, Nuremberg, Hamburg, and much else.

Hitler turned a deaf ear on his protests. His studied recklessness with public funds was sweeping German architecture out of the pre-1933 doldrums. Pretentious new public buildings were springing up – their style frequently dictated by Hitler himself, as he was prone to issue thumbnail sketches of the grand boulevards and buildings. Hitler disliked the formless products of Germany's older school of architects, and appointed the youthful Albert Speer as chief architect to Berlin, and the self-taught Hermann Giesler in Munich. To Speer – commissioned immediately to build a new Reich chancellery – Hitler commented that it would be useful for receiving and impressing the 'little nations.' His designs went further than that however: one evening in October 1941 Hitler explained in private:

> When one enters the Reich chancellery one must have the feeling that one is visiting the Master of the World. One will arrive there along wide avenues containing the Triumphal Arch, the Pantheon of the Army, the Square of the People – things to take your breath away! . . . For material we shall use granite. Granite will ensure that our monuments last forever. In ten thousand years they'll still be standing. One day, Berlin will be the capital of the world.

Hitler also handed to Speer a project for a vast stadium at Nuremberg capable of seating over 350,000 spectators: 'In future,' he said, 'all the Olympic Games will be held there.'

ON MAY 17, 1938, the Führer flew with Major Schmundt to Munich, where Martin Bormann was waiting for him with a column of automobiles. At a stately speed the convoy swept south toward Berchtesgaden, with Hitler's open supercharged Mercedes in front and his escort and luggage bringing up the rear. From time to time Hitler glanced at the speedometer to check they were not exceeding his personal speed limit of fifty miles per hour. His housekeeper and domestic staff were marshalled on the Berghof's terrace.

Orderlies stepped forward and opened his car door, and he vanished into the villa. He could hear the Scottish terriers yapping in the distance, he scented the familiar odours of wood and wax polish, and thrilled to the Great Hall's spectacle of the world spread out at his feet below.

Picking his way along the narrow paths laid out on the Obersalzberg mountainside, Hitler began to think aloud to his trusted adjutants. He still felt uneasy about his army generals. Fritsch was gone but there was still Ludwig Beck, the Chief of General Staff; and Beck was an officer 'more at home in his swivel chair than a slit trench,' as Hitler sniffed. And there was Gerd von Rundstedt, the army's senior-ranking general; Rundstedt had deeply offended Hitler recently by advising him coarsely to have nothing to do with that 'Negroid arsehole' Mussolini. In Austria, however, Hitler had renewed his acquaintance with General Franz Halder, Beck's deputy; he had already formed a fine impression of Halder during the big September 1937 manoeuvres. He decided to replace Beck by Halder soon.

While in Berlin, Hitler had asked the OKW to draw up an interim directive for 'Green.' It reached the Berghof on May 21. It opened with a reassuring definition of aims by Hitler: 'It is not my intention to destroy Czechoslovakia in the immediate future by military action unless provoked . . . or unless political events in Europe create a particularly favourable and perhaps unrepeatable climate for doing so.' That same day news reached him that Czech policemen had shot dead two Sudeten German farmers near Eger, and that the Czech government was mobilising nearly 200,000 troops on the – wholly false – pretext that Germany was already concentrating troops against her. Hitler angrily ordered Keitel and foreign minister Ribbentrop to meet him in Munich. In a secret speech six months later he was to relate: 'After May 21 it was quite plain that this problem would have to be tackled – *so oder so!* Any further postponement would only make it tougher, and its solution even bloodier.'

Claiming the backing of Hitler, Goebbels unleashed a press campaign against Prague: 'Ribbentrop is on the verge of tears,' he noted gleefully. Ribbentrop arrived in Munich, warned by General von Brauchitsch before he left that the army was not ready for an attack on Czechoslovakia. He persuaded Hitler that the press must hold its fire. Schmundt forwarded to Keitel lists of questions asked by the Führer. Could enough troops be mobilised without putting the western powers on guard? How strong would a German armoured force have to be to carry out the invasion by itself? Could the western frontier be strengthened by the construction gangs?

The OKW's replies, cabled to the Berghof, put a damper on any idea of immediate action except in an emergency. The new heavy howitzers (15-centimetre trench mortars) could not enter service before the fall, because no live ammunition would be available before then.

To attack the enemy fortifications Hitler would have only twenty-three 21-centimetre howitzers and eight of these were in East Prussia. All week Hitler grappled with the decision – to attack now or later? He was mortified by the unbridled anti-German outburst in the foreign press. Lord Halifax, the British foreign secretary, was tactless enough to write urging him not to make the situation worse – as though it was *Hitler* who had mobilised. The Czechs and the British even gloated that only Benes's mobilisation order had forced Hitler to back down.

By Wednesday, May 25, his mind was made up.

The intellectual process involved by this was evident to his private staff. They could hear him pacing up and down hour after hour at night. War with the western powers now seemed a certainty. From here on the Berghof, his naval adjutant – the cigar-smoking captain Karl-Jesco von Puttkamer – cabled to Admiral Raeder a warning to stand by to meet the Führer in Berlin on Friday, May 27; Puttkamer tipped him off that there was to be a further acceleration of warship construction, since 'the Führer now has to assume that France and Britain will rank amongst our enemies.'

Back in Berlin that Friday, Hitler informed Raeder that he wanted the new battleships *Bismarck* and *Tirpitz* completed by early 1940; he also demanded an upgrading of the armament of the new battle cruisers, the expansion of naval shipyard capacity, and the completion of the total percentage of submarines permitted under the 1935 Anglo-German Agreement. Nonetheless Hitler contrived to give the admiral the impression that the naval part of any war would not begin before 1944 or 1945; such was the contingency plan subsequently analysed by Raeder's chief of naval operations, and it was on this time assumption that the naval staff began to formulate its new ship-construction program, the Z-Plan.

Hitler had also decided to begin laying down an impregnable West Wall along the western frontiers – two parallel defence zones, the forward one to be built and manned by the army, the rearward by the Luftwaffe.

On Friday, May 27, he issued corresponding new targets to the army: it was to speed up work on the existing 1,360 concrete pillboxes, and build in addition 1,800 more pillboxes and ten thousand bunkers by October 1, 1938. On the following day, Saturday, May 28, he called a top-level confer-

ence of selected ministers and generals in the chancellery. Göring, who guessed what was afoot, whispered apprehensively to Wiedemann: 'Does the Führer really imagine that the French won't do anything if we weigh into the Czechs? Doesn't he read the Forschungsamt intercepts?'

Hitler had invited Brauchitsch, Beck, and Neurath; Ribbentrop was not in evidence, but his liaison officer Hewel came with Baron von Weizsäcker. Goebbels noted in his diary a word picture of Hitler pacing up and down, pondering his decision. 'We have to leave him alone. He is brooding on a decision. That often takes some time.' Hitler stressed that he would take sole responsibility for his decision – 'Far-reaching decisions can only be taken alone,' Beck noted him as saying – and that decision he now announced, according to Wiedemann's recollection, as follows: 'It is my unshakeable resolve that Czechoslovakia shall vanish from the map of Europe.'

He explained to them why he had not reacted immediately to the provocation offered by Prague's unwarranted mobilisation: firstly, his army was not yet ready to penetrate the Czech frontier fortifications; and secondly, Germany's rear cover, in the west, was at present inadequate to deter France. However, he said, with British rearmament still three years short of completion, and with the French forces similarly unprepared, this opportunity must be grasped soon: 'In two or three years,' he said, 'their temporary weakness will have passed.' He spoke for three hours, but when he finished he had still not indicated to them precisely *when* 'Green,' the attack on Czechoslovakia, would begin. Opinions differed. Neurath told Wiedemann as they left the chancellery, 'So, we have at least another year. A lot of things can happen before then.'

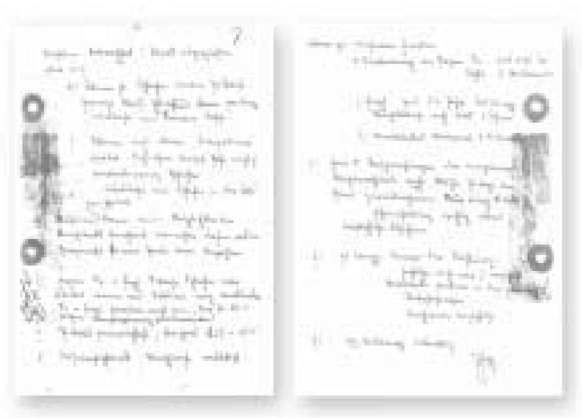
Later that Saturday Göring instructed his senior Luftwaffe generals to come and confer with him the next day. On May 30 and again on June 1 Fritz Todt's diary shows him lunching with Hitler: Hitler formally asked him to oversee the army's construction of the West Wall. On June 1 the air ministry issued its orders for the erection of Air Defence Zone West. The navy had shown no lesser alacrity. Raeder had evidently stipulated to Hitler, at their Thursday meeting, that in any war in the west the Nazis' first strategic objective must be to extend their coastal base by the occupation of neutral Belgium and Holland, because Hitler mentioned this requirement in his secret conference with the ministers and generals on the next day, May 28.

The army's general staff complied only most reluctantly. Beck suggested to Brauchitsch that they humour Hitler 'for the time being.' Hitler in turn

commented cynically to Göring, 'These old generals will just about manage Czechoslovakia – after that we'll have four or five years' grace anyway.'

Hitler's policies now turned, therefore, on destroying Czechoslovakia in a lightning four-day campaign. (It would take France at least four days to mobilise.) To Schmundt he outlined the campaign as he envisaged it: on Day One his Fifth Columnists could sabotage the Czech 'nerve centres' while the fortifications were seized by Trojan-horse tactics or bombed by the Luftwaffe. On Day Two camouflaged units would secure key bridges and targets between the German frontier and the enemy fortifications. Across these bridges on Day Three would pour the army's mechanised units to relieve the troops that had dug in among the fortifications; and on Day Four the divisions waiting on the frontier would follow, while a motorised formation and the 2nd Panzer Division lunged into the heart of Czechoslovakia.

The final OKW directive that Hitler signed on May 30 suggested no date for the attack. The document now began however, 'It is my unshakeable resolve to smash Czechoslovakia by means of a military operation.'



The handwritten notes of Hitler's chief adjutant Colonel Rudolf Schmundt ('Schm.') for the invasion of Czechoslovakia (U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

The Other Side of Hitler

While the Nazi screw was slowly turned on Czechoslovakia during the summer of 1938 Hitler stayed at the Berghof and followed the lazy routine of a country gentleman, surrounded by his personal friends and their womenfolk. He rose at ten, read the papers, strolled, watched a movie of his choice, and retired between ten and midnight. Once he stayed up until 3:15 A.M. to hear the result of the boxing match in the U.S.A. between Max Schmeling and the Negro Joe Louis; but his champion was defeated, and for days afterward his adjutants grinned as they handed him the dutifully translated telegrams sent by U.S. citizens to the Führer. 'Herr Adolph Hitler, Berlin, Germany,' cabled one correspondent from Colorado. 'How do you feel after tonight's defeat of Nazi number one pugilist, defeated by Afro-American?' And another, 'Our sympathies on the disgraceful showing Herr Max made tonight. Just about as long as you would last if we tied in to Germany.'

Hitler's military advisers went on routine summer furloughs. Jodl and Schmundt took five weeks until the end of July, Keitel then went off until mid-August. Late in June 1938 a new naval adjutant arrived, a dour Frisian, Commander Alwin-Broder Albrecht; Puttkamer returned to the destroyers. The elegant Luftwaffe adjutant Nicolaus von Below was still there, as was the new army adjutant, the brash and jocular Gerhard Engel. Himmler had also provided Hitler with a young, good-looking SS Obersturmführer as an aide-de-camp, Max Wünsche; Wünsche's diary affords us a vivid impression of the dictator's life and daily ordinances as well as proving the almost complete absence from the Berghof of gauleiters and other Nazi Party dignitaries. Once, the SA chief of staff Viktor Lutze gate-crashed the Berghof. Hitler afterward ordered his sentries to refuse access to anybody who tried to see him without appointment. The Berghof was his private

residence, and several times during the coming crises Bormann or Lammers would issue notices to that effect. Here their Führer could hobnob in peace with his court photographer Heinrich Hoffmann or with the various ladies who currently found his favour. The Wünsche diary records young architect Albert Speer as a frequent visitor, and telephoning ingratiatingly to report the birth of a daughter. And once it shows Hitler commanding Bormann to purchase a private car, as he desired to undertake a special motor journey somewhere 'incognito.'

Hitler's contempt for lawyers was notorious. In 1935 he had learned that the Supreme Court had nullified one old lady's testament because she had written it on headed notepaper; Hitler sent for Franz Gürtner and drafted a special law reversing the absurd ruling, but when he had come to write his own testament in May 1938 he wrote it out in full, in longhand, nonetheless. (This did not prevent post-war lawyers from voiding it all the same, on government instructions.) He showed what he thought of lawyers in one August 1942 directive, reported by Lammers to Gürtner: 'In many cases,' Hitler had ruled, 'it will undoubtedly be necessary to determine whether there were sexual relations between two people or not. If this much is known however, it is wholly superfluous to probe for closer particulars as to how and where such sexual intercourse took place. The cross-examination of women in particular should cease!' Lammers continued. 'Every time that cross-examining police officials or judges keep probing for details as to the how and where of the sexual intercourse, the Führer has gained the very clear impression that this is done for the same reasons that the same intimate questions are asked in the Confessional box.'

Max Wünsche's diary shows some of the other matters exercising Hitler's mind in the summer of 1938. On June 17, 'Führer orders the pedestal of the Strauss bust changed.' On July 7, 'The Führer commands that the sockets of flagpoles required more than once are to be made permanent.' Five days later, 'On the drive up to the Berghof a letter was passed to the Führer. In this, a man complains that he has still received no reply to a letter sent two years ago (Bouhler's chancellery). The Führer is very annoyed and orders that every matter addressed to him is to be seen to as a matter of urgency.' On the fourteenth Hitler is found 'deliberating whether it might not be possible to manufacture all cigarettes without nicotine content'; a few days later he 'commands that no more smoking is to be permitted at the Berghof.' This nit-picking extended to road safety: '4:45 P.M., the Führer confiscates the driving license of SS Gruppenführer [Fritz] Weitzel's chauffeur

for six months and details the Reichsführer to proceed strictly against traffic offenders.' The Wünsche diary also records small, unpublicised acts of humanity: 'The Führer will act as godfather to the triplets of Frau Feil of Kirchanschörung. A perambulator is on order in Munich and 300 marks have been sent to the mother. Doctors' bills will be taken care of.' On July 21 Wünsche recorded: 'Lunch at the Osteria. The Führer commands that the woman who passed the letter to him during the journey from the Obersalzberg is to be given help. SS Colonel [Hans] Rattenhuber is given 300 marks for this purpose.'

This was the 'popular dictator' – friend of the arts, benefactor of the impoverished, defender of the innocent, persecutor of the delinquent. In an early Cabinet meeting, on June 8, 1933, he had come out against the death penalty for economic sabotage, arguing: 'I am against using the death sentence because it is irreversible. The death sentence should be reserved for only the gravest crimes, particularly those of a political nature.'

By June 1938, however, his compunctions were fewer. 'The Führer signs the new law providing the death sentence for highway robbery'; and precisely one week later, 'The Führer countersigns the death sentence passed on the highway robber Götze.' He also interfered blatantly in the judicial process. 'The Führer,' noted Wünsche, 'commands that Salzberger, the woman-killer, is to be sentenced as rapidly as possible. Justice Minister Gürtner is informed of this.'

Every member of Hitler's staff wishing to marry had to secure his permission first, from the most august field marshal to the humblest corporal. He took a personal interest in the prospective wives, requiring to see their photographs and frequently guffawing over the oddities of the match proposed. When in August 1936 Hitler's chauffeur Kempka proposed to marry one Rosel Bubestinger, Schaub at first wrote to the SS authorities asking for rapid clearance – until her ancestry was found to be askew; then Schaub telephoned them instructions *not* to hurry the clearance, 'but on the contrary to protract it to stop them marrying. This is the explicit instruction of a Senior Person,' he added, in a clear reference to Hitler.

Hitler himself declined to marry. He had proclaimed it the duty of every German family to produce four children, but he had cynical reasons for remaining single. He had the female vote to consider. He was wedded to Germany, he liked to say. In the twenties he had picked up women casually for an evening's amusement – Emil Maurice, his driver, once told Hitler's secretaries that he used to drive him to Berlin and 'organised' girls for him.

The first romance to have a permanently disturbing effect on him was with his step-niece Geli Raubal, the daughter of his half-sister Angela. Geli's tragic death in a locked room of Hitler's Munich flat would mark the turning point in his career – a moment when he would brace himself for the future, casting off all fleshly pleasures in the most literal sense. His physician Karl Brandt would write warmly of the moral comfort and support that this young girl gave to Hitler in his years of struggle. 'I remember the emotion with which Hitler spoke of her in earlier years – it was akin to the worship of a Madonna.'

Geli had the cheerful resolution that Hitler valued in a woman, but she was jealous of other girls. In 1930 she cajoled him to take her to the Oktoberfest in Munich; while Hitler tucked into roast chicken and beer she saw Heinrich Hoffmann arrive with a comely fair-haired girl in tow whom he laughingly introduced to all and sundry as '*my* niece.' Geli saw this as a jibe at her. She next saw the girl in a photograph beaming at her from Hoffmann's studio window in Munich's Amalien Strasse, when the Schaubs went there in May 1931 to have their wedding photos taken. The girl was Eva Braun, aged twenty-one, one of Hoffmann's more decorative assistants. In later months Eva took to slipping billets-doux into the unsuspecting Hitler's pockets. On one occasion Geli found the message first.

In September 1931 Geli's tortured affair with Hitler ended with her suicide. She shot herself through the heart with Hitler's own 6.35-millimetre Walther pistol. The emotional damage that he suffered was never repaired. He ordered her room locked and left as it was, with her carnival costume, her books, her white furniture and other property scattered about it as on the day she died. In his May 1938 testament he ordained, 'The contents of the room in my Munich home where my niece Geli Raubal used to live are to be handed to my sister Angela' – Geli's mother.

A few days after Geli's death Hitler found another note from Eva in his pocket, expressing her sympathy. Eva Braun had little of Geli's character. 'The greater the man,' Hitler had defined in 1934, 'the more insignificant should be his woman.' The simple Eva fitted the bill exactly. She was a former convent schoolgirl, but gained in self-assurance and charm as she grew older. At first Hitler had taken only to inviting her to tea in his Munich apartment, and she had to resort to great feminine cunning to win him. She faked her own May 1935 diary, threatening suicide, and left it lying around for him to find. (She was infuriated by rumours that one of German soci-

ety's most notable beauties, Baroness Sigrid Laffert, was a regular house-guest at the Berghof.) Eva swallowed a dose – but not an *over*dose – of sleeping tablets and was 'rushed to the hospital.' Hitler hurried to Munich, aghast at the mere threat of a second suicide scandal around his name. Her 'diary' was shown to him. Upon her discharge from the hospital, the artful girl was powdered a sickly hue and displayed to him while her women friends cackled upstairs.

Thus she won her Adolf. In 1936 she attended the Nuremberg Rally. At the Kaiserhof hotel Frau Angela Raubal, Geli's sorrowing mother, met her face to face. The indignant mother marshalled half the ladies in the hotel in her support while the rest sided with Eva. It was open war until Hitler intervened and told his half-sister to leave Nuremberg and vacate the Berghof where she had kept house for him forthwith. Eva Braun moved into her own permanent apartment at the Berghof, but the villa now became her gilded cage too. When official guests came she withdrew to her attic rooms and immersed herself in old movie magazines. She knew that Hitler would never present her in public as his wife.

Over the years Eva and Adolf exchanged many hundreds of handwritten letters. They filled a trunk, which was looted in August 1945 by an officer of the American CIC.* And over the years Hitler remained faithful to her. Over the last decade of his life his natural libido was somewhat diminished anyway – his medical records display only half the usual secretion of testis hormone in his blood serum, comparable to that of a busy executive – or of a man serving a long prison sentence. His staff was aware of Eva's existence, but kept the secret well. Emmy Göring was never introduced to her. The staff referred to her as 'E.B.,' addressed her as 'madam,' and kissed her hand. Hitler would call her 'Patscherl'; she referred to him as 'Chief.' He continued to pay her monthly wages to the Hoffmann studios until the end of their lives. There was clearly an empathy between them, of an intensity not really documented except by their chosen manner of departure from it – the suicide pact in 1945. She remained his anonymous shadow to the end.

* See page *xvi*. The Dana press agency announced on November 22, 1945: 'A torn field-grey tunic and tattered pair of black pants – the uniform that Hitler was wearing at the moment of the assassination attempt of July 20, 1944 were among Eva Braun's private effects. Several boxes, photo albums, extracts of letters she had written to Hitler, are now in military custody.' The information came from Eisenhower's G-2, Major General Edwin L. Sibert. The uniform was ceremonially burned by the Americans in 1948.

The only other woman whose company he valued was Gerti Troost, the young widow of the architect Professor Ludwig Troost. He took her under his wing, appointed her a professor, and consulted her on colour schemes for the fine new buildings rising in Germany. He had first met her husband at Frau Bruckmann's salon in 1928, and that same day he told the architect, 'When I come to power, you will be my architect. I have great plans in mind and I believe you are the only one who can carry them out for me.' Troost did not however live long. As Hitler gave the obligatory three taps to the foundation stone for the House of Art (which still stands in modern Munich), the shaft of the silver-headed hammer broke, an omen of ill fortune of the highest degree, as the local architect Schiedermayer tactlessly whispered to the Führer in his dialect: '*Dös bedeudt a Unglück*.'

Hitler himself had sketched the rough outlines for the House of Art, using the back of an Osteria menu, one day in 1931 – a gallery of stern Grecian lines which even today is mocked as Munich's 'Athens Station.' The gallery opened in 1936, and by 1938 was recognised by the Party as a stable, Nazi-conservative breakwater in the running tide of decadent and Jewish art. Hitler treasured in his flat a picture book of the Palace of Knossos in Crete, and this influenced his architectural tastes. He sketched in pen-and-ink hundreds of monuments, memorials, arches, bridges and temple-like structures, with a remarkably good eye for proportion and perspective, though showing a propensity for over-rich designs like those of Gottfried Semper, who had erected many of Vienna's nineteenth-century buildings. It was Troost who influenced Hitler more toward neo-classical designs – the soaring shafts of granite and marble, and the squat, oblong buildings that were to characterise the twelve years of Nazi rule.

Troost's place as Hitler's chief architect was filled by Albert Speer, who had providentially built himself a studio villa higher up the Obersalzberg. Speer wrote in a memorandum on August 31, 1938:

> Only a few people know the scale of the Führer's plans for the reshaping of Berlin, Nuremberg, Munich, and Hamburg. These four cities are to get over the next ten years buildings quite capable of swallowing a major part of the building trade's capacity, whereas our present stone-quarrying capacity already falls far short of these buildings' requirements.

Speer pointed out that there were not enough architects familiar with Hitler's style to go around:

> By imparting basic design ideas and by frequent personal intervention and by innumerable personal improvements the Führer has created a new artistic school that has without doubt the elements of a viable and general architectural line. At present only a few architects are spreading the Führer's design ideas – architects who know what matters to him through their close contacts with the Führer. . . .

From 1937 on, the Elbe bridge at Hamburg particularly interested Hitler. On March 29, 1938, Todt recorded in his diary, 'Discussion with the Führer on the Hamburg suspension bridge.' Hitler also planned a huge Congress Hall, a building so vast that a giant image of the speaker would have to be thrown by television techniques onto a screen above his podium. Until the last days of his life this would-be architect would sketch buildings and facades, while his faithful Speer made scale models from the sketches, and finally the buildings themselves. Hitler wanted the monuments of the Nazi renaissance to last millennia. On December 17, 1938, when Todt put to him Professor Wilhelm Thorak's plans for a gigantic Monument to Labour, this became very clear. 'The Führer,' Todt recorded, 'expressed reservations about using Untersberg stone. . . . The Führer recommended us to consider whether a reddish granite or something similar of absolute permanence should not be used, so that this gigantic monument will still be standing in a thousand years in all its nobility despite atmospheric erosion.'

DRIVING UP and down Germany, Hitler saw his dreams come true. He liked to see the faces and hands of the German construction workers. Once Wiedemann murmured to him in 1935, 'You still have the people with you; the question is: how much longer?' Hitler indignantly replied, 'They're behind me more than ever – not "still." Come for a drive with me – Munich, Stuttgart, Wiesbaden – then you'll see just how enthusiastic the people are!'

He could not, however, take criticism. In early 1939, Wiedemann wrote a short sketch of the small talk at Hitler's table:

> All argument, however reasoned, was virtually impossible. . . . The Führer used to tell anecdotes of the World War . . . and of his own childhood and youth experiences, and he revealed a lot of whatever he happened to be mulling over at the time, so those lunching with him before a big speech had a pretty fair idea of what he was going to say. In earlier years

I was often shocked at his unbridled remarks about the Jews, the Church, the bourgeoisie, the civil service, and monarchists. Later on it left me stone cold, as it was always the same thing.

Eva Braun, asleep on a summer meadow in Bavaria before the war; from a roll of film found at the Berghof in 1945 (AUTHOR'S COLLECTION)

Whetting the Blade

Less regular visitors that summer of 1938 were the military. Occasionally they gathered in the Berghof's Great Hall – army and air force generals, or experts on fortifications, standing uncomfortably on the terra-cotta-red carpet or staring uneasily at the oak-panelled ceiling until the Führer came downstairs to hear them out. He could not fathom his generals. To Hitler, a new nation's first war was as essential as cutting teeth to a growing child. Six years from now, on June 22, 1944, he would put this blunt philosophy to a secret audience of newly promoted generals: 'Whatever is born into this world must suffer pain on its arrival. The first sign of life that a child gives as it leaves its mother's womb is not a cry of joy but a cry of pain. The mother too feels only pain. And every nation emerging in this world is also accompanied by trials and suffering; that's the way things are. . . The birth certificate of nations must always be written out in blood.'

The Luftwaffe worked hard all summer planning bombing attacks on Czech cities and airborne operations. All this was however anathema to the effete and elderly Reichswehr generals – especially Ludwig Beck, the Chief of General Staff. He fired off wordy memoranda all summer, marshalling spurious arguments against 'Green.' Even if Hungary attacked simultaneously the campaign would still last at least three weeks; but the new West Wall could not hold out more than two weeks against the French. Hitler's emergency plan to arm Labour Service battalions to man the West Wall was 'a military impossibility.'

General Beck thoroughly endorsed the idea of destroying Czechoslovakia. But, procrastinator that he was, he preferred it all to come 'in the future' – not now, when he was Chief of General Staff. His memoranda grew both shriller and gloomier, until by mid-July 1938 he was threatening

Brauchitsch that he would call on the leading generals to resign with him if the Führer would not abandon his intentions. Brauchitsch showed the document to Hitler.

Beck's arguments were riddled with fallacies – among them being that German arms production could never be increased, or that all Germany's allies were weak and unreliable, while her enemies were resolute and powerful. To appreciative audiences like Todt, Schmundt, and Engel, Hitler tore the arguments to shreds: for example, Beck had included France's *garde mobile*, police, and gendarmerie as well as her regular army, but he had not added to the German army strength the equivalent SA, SS, or police battalions. 'Beck should not think me stupid,' he complained. When it was all over he recounted in secret to hand-picked Nazi editors what this internal struggle was like:

> You can take it from me, gentlemen, it was not always easy either to take such decisions or to stand by them, because obviously the whole nation does not throw its weight behind them, far less the intellectuals: there are, of course, lots of gifted characters – at least they regard themselves as gifted – and they conjured up more obstacles than enthusiasm about such decisions. That's why it was all the more important that I stood by the decisions I took back in May and carried them out with iron determination in face of every opposition.

Hitler also had a low opinion of the army's engineers. He found the army's Inspector of Engineers and Fortifications, General Otto Förster, quite ignorant of bunker design and modern weapons technology. Mistrustfully, he sent Göring and Luftwaffe experts to inspect the army's progress with the West Wall early in June. By early 1938 only 640 blockhouses had been completed here and – until Hitler's recent demand for twelve thousand more – the army had only been planning to add another 1,360 during 1938. Göring called at the Berghof on June 14 and together with Todt delivered a devastating report on the progress made by the army so far. Virtually nothing had been done, he claimed: for instance, the entire Istein Block boasted only two puny machine guns.

The comparisons were not fair to the sixty-year-old Generaloberst Adam, because he had had first to solve all the problems of accommodating, feeding, and supplying the huge construction force. And while Todt's mass production of the earlier pillbox designs would not begin until early August,

the army was struggling with much more complex sites. Hitler was very angry; Brauchitsch in turn required Adam to visit the Berghof on June 30. Adam did not mince his language; he described Hitler's order to erect 12,000 bunkers by October 1 as impossible. 'It's written in the stars,' he put it, 'how much we'll have done by autumn.' Hitler retorted that 'The word "impossible" is unknown to [Todt]!' Todt himself was puzzled by all this army rancour, and wrote that day to the adjutant of Rudolf Hess, Alfred Leitgen: 'You put up with a lot of things that frankly you don't expect after five years of National Socialism.'

The outcome of all this was a remarkable document, dictated by Hitler to his secretary Christa Schroeder – a wordy essay on fortifications design and infantry psychology. It turned on his insistence that the West Wall must conserve the fighting power of its defenders, not just their bare skins.

He ridiculed the monstrous *Infanteriewerk* designed by the army engineers. Hitler's ideal was a small gastight pillbox that could be easily mass-produced and scattered in depth along the line, to shelter his infantry from the enemy's softening-up bombardment.

Once the bombardment was over, these pillboxes would disgorge their troops, their weapons unscathed, into the open to engage the subsequent French infantry attack. 'To be killed then is honourable,' Hitler explained, 'but to get smoked out of a blockhouse is not only cowardly but stupid.' He knew that the infantryman was a human being with mortal fears and the need for sleep, food, fresh water, and shelter.

How many of his comrades of the World War had died needlessly while going to the latrines, just because of the short-sightedness of the Otto Försters who had forgotten to provide them in the bunkers? 'Particularly the younger soldiers in combat for the first time will need to relieve themselves more frequently,' Hitler dictated. Elsewhere his document observed, 'Only somebody who has fought a defensive battle for weeks or months on end will know the true value of a flask of drinking water, and how happy the troops are when they can just brew up some tea or coffee.'

On July 4 he dictated to Fritz Todt that building projects that could not be ready that year must take second place to this Wall, 'which is a project that will make any further work in peacetime possible,' as Todt admonished State Secretary Werner Willikens next day.

All that summer Hitler's adjutants saw him sketching new bunker designs. He laid down how thick the concrete should be, the amount of steel reinforcing, the position of each girder. The sketches became blueprints,

the blueprints became wooden forms and webs of reinforcing, the millions of tons of concrete were added, and at the rate of seventy sites a day the West Wall took shape.

By late August 148,000 construction workers were employed; the army engineers provided 50,000 more. A hundred trains a day transported the construction materials to the west. Six batteries of former naval 170-millimetre guns were to be sited so that they could bombard the French towns of Strasbourg, Colmar, and Mulhouse in retaliation for any French attack on German towns. On August 12, Todt was again summoned to the Berghof and ordered by Hitler to build an intermediate position, consisting of hundreds of the heavy strongpoints he had himself sketched. Todt decided to shut down work on several autobahn sections to find the workers and foremen necessary.

HOW MUCH of all this was pure bluff, we shall never know. Spitzy himself witnessed one act after an excellent luncheon with him and his private staff: a manservant announced the arrival of a noble British emissary. Hitler started up in agitation. '*Gott im Himmel!* Don't let him in yet – I'm still in a good humour!' Before his staff's eyes, he then worked himself up, solo, into an artificial rage – his face darkened, he breathed heavily, and his eyes glared. Then he went next door and acted out for the unfortunate Lord a scene so loud that every word was audible from the lunch table. Ten minutes later he returned with sweat beading his brow. He carefully closed the door behind him and said with a chuckle, 'Gentlemen, I need tea. He thinks I'm *furious*!'

Hitler was one of the masters of psychological warfare too. 'Thank God they all read German and take our newspapers,' he would remark about his opponents with a snigger in November. (In August, he explained his method to his generals: 'Put the wind up them – show them your teeth!') Each day he scanned the Forschungsamt's latest wiretaps on the phone conversations between Prague and Czech diplomats abroad, to keep track of his own success. He deliberately spread misinformation about the actual date of any planned invasion.

On May 22 he had received Henlein in secret; two days later Henlein confided to the Hungarian military attaché in Prague, Eszterházy, 'The Führer has assured me that the present gap in the West Wall will be sealed in eight or ten weeks, and then he'll tackle the Czech problem.' On July 15 he briefed Wiedemann, whom he knew from the wiretaps to be a chatterbox, to tell Lord Halifax on his coming trip to London that the deadline was

March 1939. On August 9 he stressed to Fritz Todt that work on the West Wall would continue to October 1 at least, 'probably even until October 15 – in short, until the first shots ring out.' Two days later he ordered Halder to have the six 170-millimetre gun batteries ready to open fire by the last day in September.

As Hitler explained somewhat superfluously to Wiedemann before his departure, he was a revolutionary and as such unapproachable by the techniques of old-style diplomacy. On July 12 Hitler instructed Ribbentrop to 'talk tough' on Czechoslovakia. Göring's Luftwaffe, Ribbentrop must say, was invincible. He himself, he told Ribbentrop on a later occasion, would be in one of the first tanks invading Czechoslovakia! On July 14 the Danzig gauleiter, Albert Forster, met Mr. Winston Churchill, and told him that 'if Britain and Germany could only come to terms they could share the world between them.'

Four days later, on July 18, Wiedemann flew back from London to Berchtesgaden. Lord Halifax, he said, had revealed to him that his one ambition in life before he died was to see the Führer 'at the side of the king of England, driving to Buckingham Palace to the cheers of the crowds.'

HITLER REALISED that his army generals viewed the immediate future less festively.

Early in August 1938 he learned from General von Reichenau that there had been a gathering on August 4 of the most senior generals. Beck had read out his latest memorandum, and called for concerted opposition by the army. (As Hitler quipped to his staff, Beck was only ever able to make up his mind when his decision was *against* doing something!)

Hitler called to the Berghof's Great Hall the generals' chiefs of staff, and spoke to them for three hours. When however he spoke at one point of the West Wall, Major General Gustav von Wietersheim quoted his superior, General Adam, as predicting that the Wall could be defended for three weeks at most.

Hitler began to leaf through his notes and suddenly interrupted him with a torrent of facts and figures on the quantities of concrete, iron, and steel invested in the fortifications. Hitler declaimed, 'I'm telling you, General, the position there will be held not for three weeks but for three years!' On the day after the meeting, General von Leeb learned of it from his Chief of Staff, Manstein. 'He's just come from the Führer,' Leeb put in his diary of August 11. 'Thinks the chips are already down.'

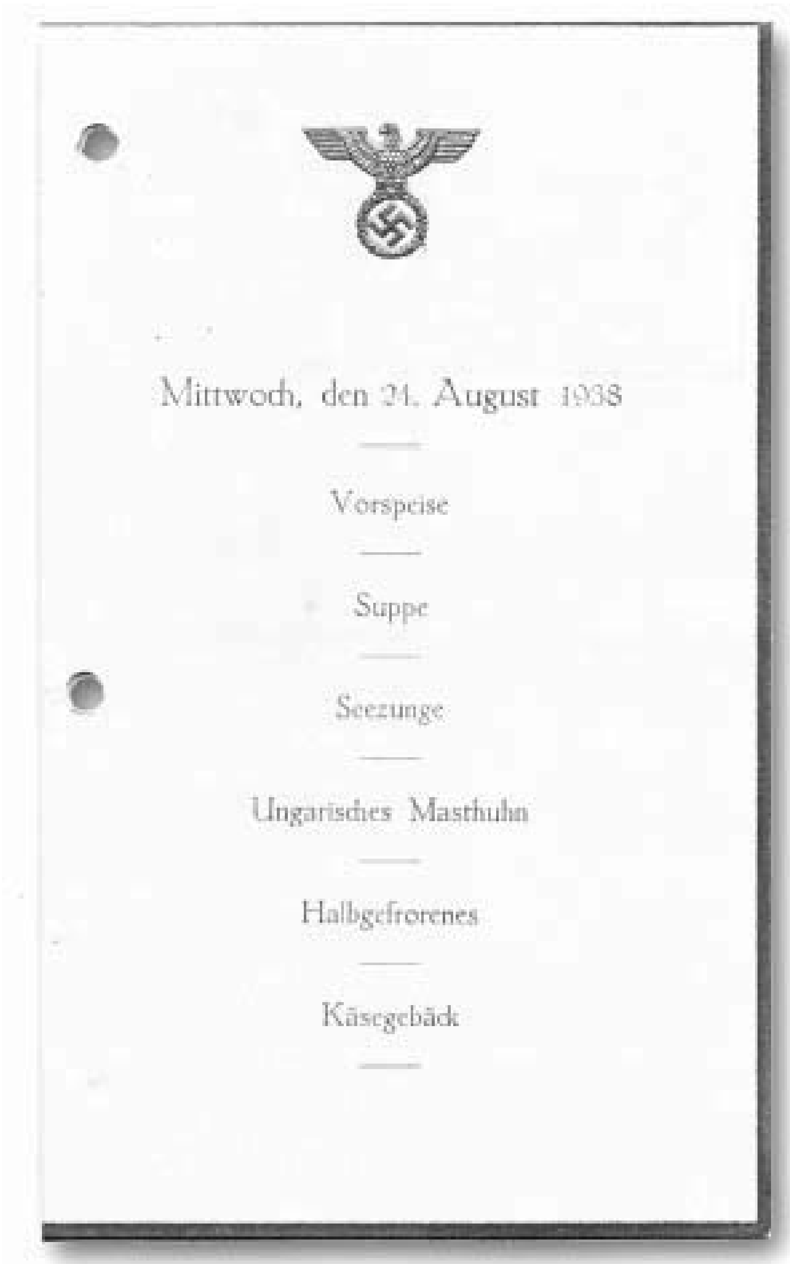
'What manner of generals are these – that one has to whip to war instead of holding them back?' Hitler asked in exasperation. An immediate antidote had to be found. He invited all the army's senior generals to attend a demonstration at the Jüterbog artillery school on August 15. He had in fact planned several such artillery demonstrations. On November 10 he was to explain to his appreciative Nazi editors: 'I was convinced that these months of activity would slowly but surely get on the nerves of the gentlemen in Prague.' At Jüterbog, construction workers had erected exact replicas of the Czech frontier fortifications. Now Colonel Walter Model, head of the General Staff's experimental branch, staged an infantry assault on them. According to Curt Liebmann, it was 'pure theatre, with much *donner und blitzen* and shouts of Hurrah!'

General Beck was furious but could say nothing. Now Hitler ordered the 150-millimetre howitzers to open fire on the 'Czech bunkers,' followed by other guns – including the high-velocity 88-millimetre anti-aircraft guns, of which he had ordered one hundred placed at the army's disposal for the assault. After the deafening barrage stilled, he clambered through the smoking and battered concrete hulks while Keitel's adjutant struck matches to illuminate the gloom. Only direct hits on the embrasures had had any real effect. Hitler emerged grinning however, knocked the dust off his brown Party tunic, and loudly professed himself astonished at the devastation.

In the canteen he spoke to the generals. Erhard Milch made a brief diary note: 'August 15, 1938, Führer's speech to the generals, 2:45–4:15 P.M. A glimpse into his thinking, his mind is made up!!' Keitel's adjutant Eberhard wrote a more complete record. This shows that Hitler once again rehearsed the problem of Lebensraum. 'It is my one great fear that something may befall me personally, before I can put the necessary decisions into effect,' he explained.

He had already taken the first seven steps: he had founded the Party to 'clean up' Germany; established political unity in 1933; taken Germany out of the League of Nations and thus restored her freedom of action; rearmed; reintroduced conscription; remilitarised the German Rhineland, and reunited Austria with the Reich.

The eighth step now lay ahead: 'However the situation may develop, Czechoslovakia has got to be eliminated before anything else.' 'In political life, there is but one moment when the Goddess of Fortune wafts by,' he declaimed. 'And if you don't grab her by the hem you won't get a second chance!' He had used that argument before, of course.



On August 24, 1938 Hitler invited the Hungarians to a feast
(AUTHOR'S COLLECTION)

Britain's rearmament was barely one year old, he pointed out. 'They'll recoil as long as we show no signs of weakening.' The quality of France's artillery and aircraft was dubious. Of Russia, Hitler had no fears whatever. As for Czechoslovakia herself, a war of nerves would do as much as anything. 'If somebody is forced to watch for three long months while his neighbour whets the blade . . .' (Hitler left the sentence unfinished.) In his view, after a brief spell of fanatical ('Hussite')* resistance, Czechoslovakia would be finished. Hitler concluded his speech, 'I am firmly convinced that Germany will win and that our National Socialist upbringing will see us through.' And he added, 'I believe that by the time this year is out we shall all be looking back on a great victory.'

Beck was horrified by all of this. In Berlin the next day, August 16, General Leeb entered in his private diary: 'Chips down. Führer convinced Britain and France won't intervene. Beck opposite opinion, gloomy mood.' At Jüterbog Beck had exclaimed to General Adam, 'After a graphic display like that the man [Hitler] will only go more berserk than ever.' He said he was going to wait until Hitler 'threw him out,' but submitted his resignation offer to Brauchitsch on the eighteenth nonetheless. Hitler asked Beck to stay on for the time being, for 'reasons of foreign policy,' and Beck meekly agreed. He probably hoped for command of an Army Group, but nothing was further from Hitler's mind.

By the end of August 1938 General Franz Halder, fifty-four, a Bavarian of slight physique and a mild, pedantic temperament, had taken over the General Staff. Beck was out – right out.

THROUGHOUT THAT month, August 1938, the 'whetting the blade' continued. When the chief of the French air force, General Joseph Vuillemin, was shown around the Luftwaffe's installations, Göring arranged a spectacular but deceitful display from one end of Germany to the other. The French delegation secretly advised Paris that the French air force would not last many days against Hitler's Luftwaffe. When Hitler tried to bribe the Hungarians into promising outright support of his invasion of Czechoslovakia however he was disappointed. Hungary had been dismembered after the World War, losing slabs of territory to Czechoslovakia. A flamboyant week-long state visit by the Hungarians, coupled with the launching of a

* The reference is to Jan Hus, the Czech patriot and revolutionary.

battle cruiser named *Prinz Eugen* in their honour*, failed to extract more than conditional undertakings from their Regent, Admiral Miklos von Horthy. They were not ready for war. In 1937 Beck had indicated that the target year was 1940 and – as the Hungarian defence minister Jenö Rátz confided to Keitel on August 22, 1938 – Hungary had laid plans accordingly.

Hitler had used all his gangster charms to impress the visitors. Knowing that Madame Horthy was a devout Catholic, he had placed a prayer stool and crucifix in her rooms, as well as a large bouquet of her favourite flower, lily of the valley. Then he took Horthy and his staff aboard the German state yacht *Grille* so that the old admiral could feel the throb of engines and the pull of waves beneath his feet again.

The secret meetings which began on August 23, during a sea trip to Heligoland, were stormy. In the morning Hitler conferred privately with Horthy. The Regent declared his willingness on principle to participate in 'Green,' but said that 1938 was far too early. Horthy picturesquely reminded the Führer that Hungary had '150 Yugoslav camps' along her other borders. When he then enlarged on the risk that 'Green' would unleash a world war, resulting in Germany's defeat by the British navy, Hitler impatiently interrupted him: 'Rubbish! Hold your tongue!'

It was inconceivable to him that Hungary was so reluctant to fight to regain her part of Slovakia. As he sourly pointed out to Imrédy that afternoon, 'This is going to be a cold buffet. There'll be no waiter service – everybody will have to help himself.'

They returned by separate trains to Berlin on August 24. On the train, Admiral Raeder sought a private interview with Hitler and asked him about the likelihood of naval warfare with Britain. He set out the formidable strategic problems that Germany would face. Hitler listened politely and ended their interview after an hour with the remark, 'Herr Admiral, what you and I have been discussing is pure theory. Britain will not fight.'

He maintained the pressure on their Hungarian visitors. Keitel visited Rátz in his hotel on August 25, according to the Hungarian record, and again emphasised Hitler's firm resolve to occupy Czechoslovakia; he added that only the date was uncertain.

* Italy had objected to the original choice of name, *Admiral Tegethoff*, offered by Hitler to Schuschnigg.

When Rátz asked the Führer next day what act would be considered a sufficient Czech provocation, Hitler replied, 'The murder of German citizens.'

PROTECTED BY two thousand security agents, Hitler set out on August 26, 1938, from Berlin for a much-publicised inspection of the West Wall. At Aachen near the Belgian frontier General Adam met him, and indicated that what he had to say was secret; he asked for Himmler, the labour-service chief Konstantin Hierl, and Fritz Todt to withdraw from the dining car, leaving generals Brauchitsch, Keitel, and Jodl. Adam stoutly began, 'As general commanding the western front I obviously have a far better insight into the situation here than anybody else, and my worries are consequently bigger.'

Hitler interrupted menacingly, 'Get to the point!' Adam embarked on a long-winded warning that by the time the winter frosts set in they would not have completed more than one-third of the West Wall at most; and that he, as the military commander, must always take the worst possible case into account, namely that the western powers would march.

He got no further. Hitler interrupted again, this time finally, to end the conference.

In a convoy of three-axle cross-country vehicles, he toured the construction sites with Adam's sector commanders. The narrow country lanes were choked with thousands of heavy trucks carrying sand, gravel, steel, cement, and tarpaulin-sheeted objects that were obviously guns and ammunition, westward to the Wall. Afterwards, he returned to the train for further conferences and to sleep. The General Staff's records show that he tried to convince the generals that France would not risk serious intervention so long as she felt menaced by Italy in North Africa and along her Alpine frontier. General Adam remained pessimistic. Hitler stubbornly maintained, 'I will not call off the attack on Czechoslovakia.'

On the twenty-ninth, the last day of this tour, he proclaimed to the generals, 'Only a scoundrel would not be able to hold this front!' General Adam stood there with his tail between his legs, according to Keitel's adjutant Eberhard.

Hitler rebuked the unfortunate western front commander, 'I only regret that I am Führer and Chancellor, and not Commander in Chief of the Western Front!'

It was obvious to Keitel that Adam's days in command were numbered.

Munich

When General Franz Halder first reported to the Führer as the new Chief of General Staff on board the *Grille* on August 22, 1938, Hitler had teased him: 'You will never learn my real intentions. Not even my closest colleagues, who are convinced that they know them, will ever find them out.'

One thing was certain: that summer Hitler really wanted a war – whether to write out the 'birth certificate' of his new Reich in blood or to 'forge the Austrians into a worthwhile component of the German Wehrmacht,' as he had explained to the generals on August 15.

'Clausewitz was right,' he exulted to his adjutants upon leaving another military display in East Prussia some days later: 'War *is* the father of all things.' This was Hitler's favourite quotation. He repeated it in his secret speeches on May 20, 1942, on January 27, 1944, again on June 22, 1944, and in his war conference of January 9, 1945 – when even his most ardent followers had long grown tired of Hitler's war. In 1938 he also told his generals that he wanted Germany's older troops, the thirty- to thirty-five-year-olds, to see some combat action in this Czech campaign; the younger soldiers could taste blood in the next.

Opinion at the top level was – and remained – divided as to whether Hitler was bluffing or not. Weizsäcker wrote privately on September 1, 'None of this would prevent me from laying a (small) wager even now that we shall preserve the peace in 1938.' Three days later however Ribbentrop again informed him that 'Green' would begin 'within six weeks.' For technical reasons, 'Green' could not begin before October 1 anyway; but equally, for the best flying weather, it ought not to be delayed after the fourteenth.

The leader of the Sudeten German party, Konrad Henlein, was Hitler's 'secret weapon' for breaching the Czech fortifications.

Hitler had secretly counselled, several times during July and August 1938, with Henlein and his chief lieutenants. Henlein was by no means enthusiastic about 'Green.' At Bayreuth on July 23 he vainly tried to dissuade Hitler from using force; Hitler replied that his young Wehrmacht needed a taste of fire. At the Breslau gymnastics festival a week later they again met: Hitler invited him up to his hotel room. He told Henlein he had nothing to add to the instructions he had long since given him. Evidently this was an act for the benefit of the journalists ringing the hotel. In mid-August, Henlein's coarse deputy, Karl-Hermann Frank, came to the chancellery and tried to convince Hitler that maps showed that the distribution of Czech and German population groups was such that 'self-determination' alone would eventually bring Czechoslovakia into Hitler's grasp. He found he was talking to deaf ears. Hitler was out for blood.

By this time the Führer had begun examining with his OKW staff ways of controlling the crisis that would unleash 'Green.' Goebbels recorded that the problem now was, how could the Führer create 'a suitable situation to strike.' On August 26 Hitler ordered Frank to prepare to manufacture incidents in the Sudeten territories. The snag was the British negotiating team now lodged in Prague under a venerable Liberal peer, Lord Runciman. Outwardly Hitler had to appear to be heeding the British proposals. He, of course, wanted all Czechoslovakia, not just control of the Sudeten regions. This explains Hitler's irritation when Henlein's Berlin agent, Fritz Bürger, brought the Runciman proposals to Munich on August 29. 'What business do the British have, poking their noses in?' exclaimed Hitler. 'They ought to be looking after their Jews in Palestine!'

An apprehensive Konrad Henlein appeared at the Berghof on September 1. Goebbels had also come, and Hitler told them that the gap in their country's western defences was virtually closed. 'Britain,' he prophesied, 'will hold back because she does not have the armed might. Paris will do what London does. The whole affair must unroll at top speed. For high stakes you've got to run big risks.' Goebbels noted these words with ill-concealed apprehension. Hitler showed Henlein over Bormann's model dairy – built at great expense to supply the SS barracks. ('God knows the price of a pint of your milk,' Hitler used to bully him.) He wisecracked to Henlein: 'Here are the representatives of the National Socialist Cow Club!' He was evidently in high spirits – but Henlein was not. Hitler repeated that he was still planning a military solution: Czechoslovakia was to be eliminated 'this September.' Henlein was to keep on negotiating with Prague,

and start manufacturing 'incidents' from September 4. On the second, Hitler delivered another little homily to his cronies – Goebbels, Henlein, Ribbentrop, Bormann, Speer, and Hoffmann – on 'keeping one's nerve.' Seeing Henlein off at 3:30 P.M., Hitler is alleged to have laughed: 'Long live the war – even if it lasts eight years.'

Perhaps it was all bluff. (There are clues that Hitler was using Henlein as a powerful psychological weapon – for instance, a secret directive to the Nazi press a few days later: 'There's to be a reception at Nuremberg. . . Henlein is not being mentioned in the official report on this, but there is no objection to the publication of photographs that may show him attending this reception.')

HENLEIN WAS not alone in his anxiety. The conservative minister of finance, Count Schwerin von Krosigk, sent to Hitler a memorandum formulated in quite clever terms: the German public lacked the inner resolution to fight a new war. 'It will not be able to bear for long the hardships of war, large and small – the ration cards, the air raids, the loss of husbands and sons.' So wrote Krosigk on September 1 in his memorandum. In his speech to Nazi editors two months later Hitler would refer to 'the hysteria of our top ten thousand.'

He turned an equally deaf ear on his diplomats. The moderate Konstantin von Neurath tried to see him and was refused. When his ambassador in London tried to bring him a private message written by Neville Chamberlain, Hitler refused to receive him too. When his ambassador in Paris quoted to Berlin the French foreign minister's clear warning that France would stand by Czechoslovakia, Hitler pushed the telegram aside and said it did not interest him. Hans Dieckhoff, his ambassador in Washington, was given equally cavalier treatment. All three ambassadors demanded to see Hitler. It was not until the Party rally however that he condescended – turning to Wiedemann and instructing: 'Well, show the *Arschlöcher* [arseholes] in!' On Ribbentrop's advice he instructed all three ambassadors not to return to their posts for the time being. Weizsäcker indignantly wrote for the record, 'After hearing out Messrs. Dieckhoff, von Dirksen, Count Welczek, [Hans Adolf] von Moltke [ambassador in Warsaw] and [Hans Georg] von Mackensen [Rome] on September 7, I reported as follows to Herr von Ribbentrop on the eighth: "The opinion of all these gentlemen is, with certain shades of difference, in flat contradiction to that of Herr von Ribbentrop inasmuch as they do not believe that the western democracies will abstain in the event

of a German-Czech conflict." I added that my own opinion is well enough known to Herr von Ribbentrop as it is.'

Hitler's own routine was hardly that of a dictator preparing for war. He was to be seen spending the day visiting galleries in Munich: he inspected the models of Speer's new chancellery building and paintings for the 'Führer Building' (*Führerbau*), the Party HQ. The evening was passed idly at the Berghof, watching two unsatisfying Hollywood movies – both of which Hitler peremptorily halted in mid-reel.

After midnight of August 30–31, Major Schmundt brought planning papers relating to the phoney 'incident' that was to be staged to justify 'Green.' The OKW argued for the main 'incident' to be staged when the weather was favourable for the Luftwaffe; and it must be early enough in the day for authentic word to reach OKW headquarters in Berlin by noon of the day before the Nazi invasion. It would put the Germans in enemy territory at the mercy of the Czechs and prevent the issue of any warning to diplomatic missions in Prague before the first air raid. It would however satisfy for Hitler his vital condition for success: surprise.

Halder had outlined the General Staff plan to Hitler and Keitel aboard the *Grille* at Kiel, using a map of Czechoslovakia. The country would be bisected at its narrow waist. To Hitler this seemed wrong: this was precisely what the enemy would expect. He asked Halder to leave the map, and after returning to Berlin he instructed Brauchitsch that the tanks were to be employed quite differently, concentrated into one force which would drive north-eastward from Nuremberg, through the Czech fortifications and Pilsen and straight on to Prague. The political objective was to capture Prague, the Czech capital, in the very first few days.

The General Staff disagreed with Hitler's plan. He summoned Brauchitsch to the Berghof on September 3, and dinned into him why he insisted on his own plan. Originally, he said, the Czechs had not prepared their defences in anticipation of attack from Austria; so their fortifications facing Rundstedt in Silesia were far stronger. 'The Second Army might run slap into a second Verdun. If we attack there we shall bleed to death attempting the impossible.' What the Czechs would not expect would be the attack Hitler planned to deliver with Reichenau and a massed force of tanks. 'An army plunged into the heart of Bohemia will settle the issue.' The General Staff simply ignored Hitler's plan. Halder told Keitel that the orders had already gone out, and it was too late to alter them. Keitel flew to Berlin early on Septem-

ber 8 and urged Brauchitsch to comply. When however the OKW chief returned to Hitler in Nuremberg – where the Party rally was approaching its spectacular climax – the next morning, all he could report was that both Brauchitsch and Halder flatly refused to alter their plans. The two reluctant generals were summarily ordered down from Berlin and presented themselves that night at Hitler's Nuremberg hotel, the Deutscher Hof.

The row lasted five hours. Halder stated the General Staff case. Hitler replied that they should plan with regard to the enemy's most probable line of action. 'No doubt,' he conceded, 'your planned pincer-operation is the ideal solution. Its outcome is however too uncertain for us to rely on it, particularly since for political reasons we must obtain a rapid victory.' He reminded them that history alone showed how hard it was to call off an operation that had only half-succeeded – that was the familiar road to horrors like Verdun. The tanks would be frittered away piecemeal, and when they were needed for the subsequent operations in depth they would not be there.

All this now seems self-evident, but at the time, in September 1938, it was by no means so obvious that Hitler was right. The two generals still refused to give way. In the small hours of the morning Hitler finally ceased reasoning with them and *ordered* them to redeploy the tanks as he had said – they had until the end of the month to do it. Halder shrugged; but Brauchitsch startled everybody with an effusive declaration of loyalty. After they had gone, Hitler ventilated to Keitel his anger about these cowardly and hesitant army generals: 'It's a pity I can't give my gauleiters each an army – they've got guts and they've got faith in me.'

To shame these defeatist generals, Hitler alluded to them in withering terms at the Nuremberg rally, while they listened stonily from the front rows. He announced the award of the National Prize to Fritz Todt for building the West Wall – a gratuitous slight to the army engineers.

Only about forty thousand Labour Service conscripts could be spared for the rally – the rest were working on the Wall. For five hours on the eleventh Hitler stood in his car at Adolf-Hitler Platz, hatless under the broiling September sun, taking the salute as 120,000 SA and SS men marched past, breaking into the spectacular high-kicking 'parade step' as they came within sight of their Führer. He joked weakly with the diplomats at their formal reception, and even allowed the French ambassador to press a lily into his hands – the symbol of France. 'It is a sign of peace as well,' explained François-Poncet eloquently, 'and should be worn by those who de-

sire to work for peace.' Hitler divested himself of the lily as soon as he decently could. The newspaper headlines read: 'SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE SUDETENLAND – THE FÜHRER DEMANDS AN END TO SLAVERY.'

On September 13, Prague proclaimed martial law around the city of Eger. Things were going just as Hitler planned. The Nazi press proclaimed next day: 'CZECH MURDER TERROR NEARS ANARCHY. GERMANS SLAIN BY CZECH GUNS.' From the Sudeten town of Asch on the evening of the fourteenth Karl Frank telephoned Hitler to appeal for German troops and tanks to intervene right now. Hitler responded: 'Frank – bide your time. The time isn't right yet.'

INDEED, IT was not. Late the previous night, September 13, the British ambassador had handed to Baron von Weizsäcker a letter in which Neville Chamberlain, aged nearly seventy, offered to fly at once to Hitler to find a peaceful solution. Hitler could hardly have refused Chamberlain's offer, and he was nettled to have lost the initiative like this, however briefly.

The 'brown pages' – top secret wiretaps by Göring's Forschungsamt – were pouring into the Berghof on the fourteenth by courier. Only that morning, Jan Masaryk, the volatile Czech envoy in London, had talked to his foreign ministry in Prague. 'But if he [Hitler] marches,' Prague had asked him, 'then everybody else will march, won't they?' Masaryk was not so hopeful: 'I think after a while they will. People here won't look me in the eye. They're just an uncouth rabble!' The voice in Prague exclaimed, 'No, impossible!' 'They're just stupid people who have got fifteen cruisers,' explained Masaryk, 'and they're frightened of losing them.' He said that as for France, 'There are quite a few ragamuffins there too.'

The tone of these remarks told Hitler volumes about morale in London and Prague. Hitler's illicit knowledge of these conversations explains much of his confidence. The wiretaps showed, significantly, that Chamberlain was delaying Masaryk's incoming telegrams from Prague for days on end. Thus, ironically, Masaryk was obliged to rely even more heavily on the telephone lines to Prague. The daily FA wiretaps showed the Czech envoy mouthing obscene insults about the western statesmen, appealing to Prague for still more cash – urgently – and plotting with Churchill and his Paris colleague the early overthrow of the Chamberlain and Daladier regimes.

At 9:50 P.M. on September 14, 1938, Masaryk put through an urgent call to Dr. Beneš himself. 'Have you heard about Chamberlain?' 'No.' 'He's flying to Berchtesgaden at 8:30 A.M. tomorrow!' The wiretap analysis con-

tinued, '. . . After a lengthy pause Beneš exclaimed, obviously horrified, "It's not possible!"' Masaryk replied that Chamberlain would be accompanied by 'that swine' Sir Horace Wilson.

The next day a thirty-man SS guard of honour formed on the terraces outside the Berghof. At six the English party arrived. Chamberlain was in the familiar dark suit and stiff wing-collar, with a light-coloured necktie and a watch chain across his waistcoat.

Upstairs in his study Hitler launched into his usual tirade about the mounting Czech terror campaign. He claimed that 300 Sudeten Germans had been killed already. Chamberlain had not however come to talk of war. 'If Herr Hitler really wants nothing more than the Sudeten German regions,' he said in effect, 'then he can have them!' Hitler, taken aback, assured him he had no interest whatever in non-Germans. In fact Chamberlain had thrown something of a spanner in the works of 'Green.' The Führer however was buoyant as he discussed the conversation that evening with Ribbentrop and Weizsäcker. The latter wrote this personal record:

> By making no bones about his brutal intention of settling the Czech problem now – even at the risk of a general European war – and by indicating that he would then be content in Europe he [Hitler] had prodded Ch[amberlain] into undertaking to work toward the ceding of the Sudeten regions to Germany. He, the Führer, had not been able to refuse a plebiscite.
>
> If the Czechs reject this, the way will be clear for a German invasion; if the Czechs yield, then Czechoslovakia's own turn will not come until later, for instance next spring. There are in fact distinct advantages in disposing of the first – Sudeten German – stage amicably.
>
> In this confidential discussion the Führer did not conceal that he has taken a future war into account, and is fostering much further-reaching plans. For this he volunteered not only nationalist motives, but what might be termed educational ones as well, or ones of latent dynamism. He radiated self-confidence and fearlessness in war and foreign policy, and spoke quite unambiguously of his own personal responsibility for steering Germany through the inevitable passage of arms with her enemies in his own lifetime.
>
> The Führer then related a number of details of his talk with Chamberlain itself – the little tricks of bluff and bluster with which he had fenced his conversation partner back into his corner.

A year later Weizsäcker recalled, 'From the Reich chancellery emanated the slogan that Germany's youth needed a war to steel itself. The war against Czechoslovakia took on the character of *l'art pour l'art* [art for art's sake].'

In fact Chamberlain and the French proposed to give Hitler all areas with over 50 percent German population. Not surprisingly, Jan Masaryk was heard frantically telephoning Dr. Beneš after Chamberlain's return to London, complaining that 'Uncle' had not yet told anybody anything about his Berghof talk with Hitler. The Czech envoy added delicately, 'May I ask for money to be sent if I am to do anything? . . . I need just enough, you understand?' Beneš did: 'I will put it in hand at once.'

Weizsäcker's record leaves no doubt that Hitler had no intention of letting Chamberlain fob him off with just the Sudeten regions. He had to tread very cautiously for a while however. When Canaris telephoned the Berghof to ask whether his guerrilla and sabotage units there should start their dirty work, Keitel instructed: 'No, not for the time being.' Hitler had developed a surer method – a Free Corps, ostensibly raised spontaneously by the aggrieved Sudeten Germans inside the Czech frontier.

In fact about ten thousand of Henlein's supporters had fled into Germany over the last week: Hitler ordered the Wehrmacht to equip them with suitable weapons – Austrian-made Mannlicher rifles – and to return the men to Czechoslovakia under cover of darkness. These irregulars would be aided by regular German army and SA officers as advisers, and provided with motor transport by the Party. Hitler disclosed this plan to Karl-Hermann Frank on September 16 in a two-hour conference. The Henlein Free Corps would carry out commando-type sorties into the Czech frontier positions each night. Their aim would be – as Schmundt explicitly telegraphed to the OKW next day – 'to keep up the level of disturbances and clashes.'

In the summer of 1937, Martin Bormann had observed how his Chief liked strolling down to the tea pavilion; he decided to construct for the Führer a new teahouse to rival any other in the world. That August Bormann had selected the craggy peak of the 5,500-foot Kehlstein, not far from the Berghof, and personally hammered in the marking pegs together with Fritz Todt. By September 16, 1938, this 'Eagle's Nest' was finished.

At four p.m. Hitler, Todt, and Bormann drove up to the new eyrie – Bormann proud, but Hitler sceptical. He had known nothing of Bormann's surprise plan until it was too late to revoke; according to Julius Schaub,

Hitler blamed it on Bormann's *folie des grandeurs*, smiled indulgently, and let himself be persuaded that it would serve to impress foreign visitors.

The new road ended some way below the Kehlstein's peak. A parking area had been blasted out of the rockface, into which were set massive bronze doors, topped with a granite slab reading 'Built 1938.' The doors swung open and the car drove on into the mountain along a 170-yard tunnel wide enough for two cars to pass. At the tunnel's end was a circular vault not unlike a church choir: facing them were bronze sliding doors. Bormann invited Hitler into the windowless room beyond the doors – an elevator with walls of polished brass, mirrors, and upholstered chairs. They were lifted to the very crest of the Kehlstein.

As Hitler stepped out, he found himself looking over a view even more majestic than from the Berghof. Hitler spent an hour up here. He was in fact silently alarmed by the thumping of his heart at this altitude, and he was short of breath (this he told his doctors). On the next day, the seventeenth, he took Dr. Goebbels and his senior henchmen up to this mountaintop retreat and briefed them about the talks with Chamberlain – this 'ice-cool,' calculating Englishman. He expressed high praise for their propaganda effort, saying: 'We've half won the war already.' Goebbels was optimistic that Prague would buckle under the war of nerves, but Hitler disagreed. 'In 1948,' he explained, 'it will be just three hundred years since the Peace of Münster. We've got to liquidate that peace treaty by then.' He visited this lofty eyrie only once more over the next few days, and only seldom afterward.

There were now two weeks to go before 'Green.' At training grounds on the periphery of Czechoslovakia, carefully phased manoeuvres were beginning.

Chamberlain had promised to return with his Cabinet's agreement. Hitler was well-informed on developments in London. He knew that French premier Edouard Daladier and foreign minister Georges Bonnet had arrived in London on the eighteenth. At 1:20 p.m. on the nineteenth Masaryk was heard plaintively telephoning Beneš, 'The uncles here are in session and haven't breathed a word to anybody yet.' Beneš referred to the rumours that he had heard involving Hungary and the Carpatho-Ukraine. In his view all such plans were quite out of the question, but Masaryk confirmed, 'They are talking about ceding territories and suchlike, you know.' After more discussion Masaryk added vehemently, 'I haven't the slightest intention of

going over there [to Downing Street]. They haven't sent for me, so what I say is, f–ck them, Mr. President!' During the afternoon the Anglo-French plan was finally communicated to Beneš but not to Masaryk. It virtually instructed Beneš to surrender: he was to cede to Hitler all areas with more than fifty percent German population. Beneš told Masaryk the gist of it on the phone at seven P.M. and asked what people like Churchill thought. Masaryk responded, 'When I asked them, they . . . hoped we won't take it lying down.' He added, 'Seventy-five percent would be one thing, but *fifty* percent – that's impossible.' Beneš sighed, 'Frightful!'

For the next two days Prague officially remained silent. Beneš was heard explaining to Masaryk that he was searching for some formula, neither Yes nor No, to enable him to keep honourably negotiating. Masaryk referred contemptuously to Chamberlain's approaching return to Germany: 'The old man's packing his bags again, he's in quite a dither.' Again he asked for funds to be urgently rushed to him in London: 'The balloon will soon go up and I'll find myself without a penny.'

By early September 19, Henlein's Free Corps terror squads had begun operations. The Czech army was moved closer to the border. Hitler's own generals persuaded him to limit the Free Corps operations, therefore, to twelve-man commandos or smaller. That day he resumed his wooing of the Hungarians. Horthy – by now again in Germany as Göring's guest on a shoot – had written privately to Hitler expressing alarm over newspaper reports that Beneš was about to cede the German-speaking regions to the Reich, 'leaving everything else as it was.' (The letter is amongst Horthy's papers in Budapest.) Hitler discussed this with Imrédy and Kánya at the Berghof on September 20.

At four P.M. the same day, Hitler received Joseph Lipski, Warsaw's ambassador to Berlin. Hitler had wooed Poland, Czechoslovakia's other neighbour, since mid-July; Goebbels had briefed Nazi editors not to report anti-German incidents in Poland 'for the time being.' On September 6 Hans Fritzsche had repeated Goebbels's directive: 'There are to be no reports published on incidents in Poland . . . however much we may regret it.' And three days later there had followed this telling explanation: 'It is a basic principle of Third Reich foreign policy only to tackle one thing at a time.'

Now Hitler had the reward for his forbearance: the Polish ambassador coyly confirmed the Warsaw government's predatory interest in Tešin, and assured Hitler that the Poles 'would not shrink at all from using force.' A day or two later, as Hitler, Ribbentrop and Goebbels set off together for

Bad Godesberg, Hitler repeated to them that Ambassador Lipski had 'promised' that Poland would use force against Czechoslovakia.

It was all very satisfactory. Hitler and Ribbentrop drove complacently to Pullach and spent the evening at Bormann's home. By midnight, Hitler knew that Chamberlain would be coming to Bad Godesberg to meet with him on the twenty-second.

At two A.M. on September 21 the British and French envoys in Prague jointly called on Beneš to accept their Anglo-French plan 'before creating a situation for which France and Britain could take no responsibility.'

Six hours later, Göring's wiretappers found a cryptic telephone conversation going on between Prague and Paris. The Prague end announced that they had been forced to accept the plan since both Britain and France had threatened to leave Czechoslovakia in the lurch completely otherwise.

The wiretaps indicated that Churchill was promising Masaryk that Chamberlain would be overthrown by that afternoon, that three ministers in Paris had cabled written protests to Daladier, and that 'that oaf' Bonnet was on his way out too.

Masaryk's British friends were urging Prague to delay any formal decision on the plan until the twenty-sixth at least. Masaryk's voice was heard adjuring Beneš:

> Mr. President, one thing is most important. . . Public support here is growing like wildfire. . . That is what Churchill, Eden, and the archbishop want you to know.

Now Hitler knew too, and forewarned was forearmed. On first hearing that Prague was minded to accept, he had instructed his OKW to consider the administrative problem of an unopposed occupation of the German speaking areas. Now however the FA wiretaps decided Hitler differently. It seemed that Beneš was going to play for time.

Chamberlain arrived at the Cologne airport on September 22. He brought Sir Horace Wilson ('that swine') with him, as before. At the Rhine Hotel Dreesen in Godesberg Chamberlain reminded Hitler of their Berghof agreement.

Hitler solemnly pronounced: *'Es tut mir furchtbar leid, aber das geht nicht mehr* [I'm frightfully sorry but that won't do any longer].' He now insisted on the Wehrmacht being permitted to occupy the German-speaking areas of Czechoslovakia immediately. Chamberlain protested that Hitler had bro-

ken his word. After three hours of listening to Hitler's verbose arguments he reclined on a sofa and announced he had done what he could – his conscience was clear. As neither side would yield, the talks were broken off; and the British delegation returned by ferry to their splendid Hotel Petersberg. In May 1942 Hitler referred to the 'two-faced' British behaviour here – from the FA wiretaps he knew of their private willingness to make the concessions he needed, but publicly they still dug their heels in. His annoyance was increased by the studied insolence of the British delegation and their sloppy attire. He later rebuked Henderson, 'If any more people in tired suits call on me, I'll send my ambassador in London to see your King in a pullover: tell that to your government.'

For several hours Hitler delayed the next meeting while his code-breakers deciphered Chamberlain's secret report to his Cabinet. The prime minister's next step was thus not unexpected: on September 23 he sent a note to Hitler explaining that British public opinion would not tolerate the new German demands. Hitler replied that he mistrusted the Czechs: they were playing for time. Chamberlain replied tersely, asking the Führer to set down his proposals in a memorandum. The document was handed to Chamberlain on his return to Hitler's hotel that evening at ten. Almost at once, at 10:30 P.M., a messenger brought a note to Hitler: 'Beneš has just announced general mobilisation over Czech radio.' That galvanised the meeting. Hitler stood up and declared that that was that. Chamberlain also stood up and calmly prepared to leave.

This was not what Hitler wanted at all; he was saved by Ribbentrop, who suggested that as the British had asked for the memorandum they should at least read it. They sat down. The document laid down a deadline – the Czechs were to begin evacuating the German areas on the twenty-sixth and complete it by the twenty-eighth. Chamberlain rightly objected that this was just a *Diktat*. Hitler smugly replied, 'It isn't. Look – it's headed "memorandum."' Under pressure, he did, however, agree to relax the deadline to October 1 (his secret X-day for 'Green'). 'You know,' he flattered Chamberlain, 'you're the only man I've ever made a concession to.' (He had used the same words to Schuschnigg at the Berghof in February.) At 1:15 A.M. the Führer bade him farewell. This was his last territorial claim in Europe, he assured him. Chamberlain replied, 'Auf Wiedersehen.'

Hitler sat in the hotel garden for some time, watching the Rhine swirl past. After a while he turned and thanked Ribbentrop for having intervened earlier: 'You saved the day for us.'

Chamberlain reported the next afternoon to his Cabinet.* Masaryk, in London, was heard sneering on the phone to Beneš, 'The Germans made such mincemeat of him that this morning he could barely manage a stutter.' When Masaryk mentioned the rumour that Hitler was demanding that the Czechs should allow the Wehrmacht in at once, Beneš exploded: 'Out of the question . . . we can't give up our positions!'

Hitler's lunch table was dominated by the question whether Beneš would give way. He himself was sure that the Czech president would not, while Goebbels argued that he would. Hitler repeated that his army would attack on or after the twenty-eighth. 'That gives the Führer five days,' Goebbels realised. 'He fixed these dates way back on May 28,' he added. That Prague was standing firm was quite pleasing to Hitler. France had also begun partial mobilisation however, and Hitler had not bargained for that to happen until X-day itself. Moreover, elements of the British fleet had put to sea. On September 25 France, Britain, and Czechoslovakia all rejected Hitler's Godesberg 'memorandum.'

As Beneš told Masaryk to make clear, in announcing this to London, the map forwarded by Chamberlain with the memorandum 'would mean nothing more nor less than the immediate surrender of our whole nation into Hitler's hands.' He added, 'Show them all, on the map, how our nation is to be destroyed!' Masaryk replied, 'So far they haven't given me the map. It's a shabby trick.'

ON SEPTEMBER 26, 1938 Hitler summoned Keitel and told him that 'Green' would start on the thirtieth. Turning the FA wiretaps on Masaryk over in his hands, with their almost untranslatable obscenities about Chamberlain and Sir Horace Wilson, he saw a possibility of driving a wedge into the enemy camp. He instructed Göring to disclose the intercepts to Ambassador Henderson. When Wilson personally came to Berlin to put to him Chamberlain's latest proposal Hitler – who already knew of it thanks to Masaryk's loquacity on the phone – dismissed it as valueless so long as Prague would not accept the Godesberg terms. He bragged to Goebbels that he had yelled

* At 3:30 P.M. Chamberlain told his Inner Cabinet he thought he had 'established some degree of personal influence over Herr Hitler'; he felt Hitler would not go back on his word. At five P.M. he told the full Cabinet that Hitler was 'extremely anxious to secure the friendship of Great Britain . . . it would be a great tragedy if we lost an opportunity of reaching an understanding with Germany.' He believed that Hitler now trusted him.

at the Englishman, and accused him of evasions. 'The Führer,' wrote Goebbels, 'believes in his mission with the sureness of a sleepwalker. Not for one moment does his hand tremble. A great genius in our midst.' Hitler now dictated to Henderson that he would give Beneš until Wednesday the twenty-eighth to accept. 'Midnight Wednesday?' the British ambassador somewhat ambiguously asked. 'No, by two P.M.,' said Hitler. Thus the formal ultimatum was spoken.

The pressure on the Führer was steadily increasing however. Lord Rothermere privately cabled him to think twice before making his scheduled speech at the Berlin Sportpalast that evening. The speech was rowdy and provocative. Hitler declared that his troops would march into the Sudeten German areas in five days' time, on October 1. 'Our mind is made up. It is up to Herr Beneš now!'

Shortly after Sir Horace Wilson left the next morning, Hitler sent Schmundt to Keitel with written instructions that the initial shock troops were to move up to a line from which they could attack on the thirtieth. He ordered the Free Corps to step up its terrorist activities. He also directed that a mechanised division rumble through the streets of central Berlin. Goebbels mingled with crowds in the streets, and found them baffled and anxious at the martial display. 'The public is filled with a profound worry,' he recorded. 'They know we're coming in to the last lap now.'

DID HE still want war? Weizsäcker, who appeared after midnight, found the Führer sitting alone with Ribbentrop. Hitler curtly announced that he would now wipe out Czechoslovakia. Weizsäcker noted some days later, 'This was said only in the presence of Ribbentrop and myself. . . So it would be incorrect to assume that the Führer was just putting up a huge and monstrous bluff. It was his resentment over May 22 – when the British jeered at him for "backing down" – that was propelling him along the path to war.' It is possible that Hitler knew from the FA wiretaps that Weizsäcker was conniving with the British diplomats.

In the coming hostilities, Hitler wanted the SS to play an important part. He arranged for two Death's Head battalions to be equipped with antitank and field guns to protect an 'autonomous Sudeten German government' being set up at Asch, now wholly occupied by Henlein's troops. In the Jauernig enclave south of Breslau, Henlein had already seized power. Control over Henlein's Free Corps would pass to Himmler on the day that 'Green' began.

Hitler's ultimatum would expire at two p.m. the next day, the twenty-eighth. His military attaché in Paris estimated that France could assemble her first sixty-five divisions on the West Wall by the sixth day of mobilisation. In an internal conference, Göring grimly conceded that war seemed inevitable and might well last seven years. Early on the twenty-eighth, the naval attaché telephoned from London that a reliable source had just informed him that King George VI, upon whose 'vacillation' Hitler had been relying, had signed the order for mobilisation. Only the date needed to be inserted.

At ten a.m. Brauchitsch saw Keitel and begged him to prevail on the Führer not to invade more than just the Sudeten areas. Canaris's estimation was that war with the west was certain. General Halder, the new Chief of General Staff, was seen in a state of nervous collapse, sobbing helplessly. Worse, by midday Berlin knew that the British fleet had mobilised. Hitler undoubtedly realised now that his blackmail would profit him no more; it was this news of the Royal Navy's mobilisation, he is said to have frankly admitted to Göring later, that tilted the balance for him.

Early on the twenty-eighth, the French ambassador François-Poncet asked to see Hitler to bring secret new proposals from Bonnet of which even the Czechs were still unaware. An interview was arranged for noon. Shortly before noon Hitler was in conference with Ribbentrop when Göring arrived with word – which his Forschungsamt may have obtained – that Mussolini had telephoned the Italian ambassador in Berlin a few minutes before eleven to say that Chamberlain had just contacted him; Mussolini wanted the Führer to know that he backed him to the hilt, but would Hitler be willing to postpone mobilisation by twenty-four hours?

A heated discussion broke out in Hitler's Cabinet room. Göring accused Ribbentrop of actually wanting a war. Hitler tersely silenced them both. 'Ribbentrop,' noted Goebbels, who had arrived for lunch, 'nurtures a blind hatred of Britain. Göring, Neurath and I urge Hitler to accept [the ambassadors' proposals.] Göring . . . totally shares my viewpoint and gives Ribbentrop a piece of his mind.' Over lunch Goebbels could contain himself no longer and stated bluntly: 'Mein Führer, if you think that the German public is thirsting for war, you are wrong. They watch its approach with a leaden sense of apathy.'

At noon François-Poncet was shown in. The new Bonnet plan which he brought was an improvement, but not enough. Almost at once an adjutant handed to Hitler a folded note – the Italian ambassador was outside. Hitler

excused himself, saying: 'I'm wanted on the phone,' and went out to receive the Mussolini message. He agreed to postpone the deadline by one day. The British were also stirring: the FA is certain to have intercepted Chamberlain's sensational telephone message to his Berlin embassy at 11:30, announcing that he was ready to come to Germany yet again.

Hitler returned to François-Poncet, but almost immediately the Italian ambassador was back: Mussolini had telephoned that Chamberlain had a proposal to make that would be a 'grandiose victory.'

At 12:30 P.M., as François-Poncet was leaving, Henderson arrived with Chamberlain's formal proposal for a Five-Power conference: 'I am ready,' wrote the elderly British prime minister, 'to come to Berlin myself.'

Hitler dictated a brief summary of his minimum demands, for the Italian ambassador to forward to Mussolini. Thus peace seemed assured.

Hitler was still eating when Ambassador Attolico returned at 2:40 P.M. He welcomed the Italian with his mouth still full. Attolico made a brave effort to speak German: '*Morgen 11 Uhr München!*' (11 A.M. in Munich.) Hitler laughed out loud.

During the afternoon formal invitations were issued to the other two powers, Britain and France. Neither declined. Czechoslovakia was not invited.

At 8:50 P.M. that September 28, Hitler's special train hauled out of Berlin's Anhalt station en route to Munich for the historic conference.

BY 9:30 A.M. he was awaiting Mussolini's train at the small German frontier station. The Duce entered the Führer's saloon car with Count Ciano. As the train started back toward Munich Hitler chortled out loud at the way 'we two revolutionaries' were managing to set Europe alternately by the ears. Keitel sketched in the military situation confidentially to the Duce.

Hitler reassured him – the western powers would not intervene. Mussolini asked for and was given a coloured map showing the present Czechoslovakia. Hitler explained he was not inclined to accept time-consuming plebiscites in the disputed areas. On the other hand, he said, he did not want one Czech village.

The events at the 'Führer Building' in Munich, bedecked with the flags of the four powers, were inevitably an anticlimax.

Chamberlain's plane arrived during the morning. Hitler waited for him with Mussolini and the French prime minister Edouard Daladier in the smoking room. His major-domo had prepared sandwiches and beer there.

Since he was asking only for the German-speaking areas, and the other three powers were agreeing to this, all that remained was to discuss the modes of transfer; and since the draft agreement that he had handed to Attolico yesterday was now being dished up by Mussolini in Italian as though it were his own, the result was a foregone conclusion.

The only snag was Hitler's stubborn demand that the Czechs must evacuate the territories immediately, and Chamberlain's equally obstinate defence of the Czech position. Hitler toyed with a watch throughout the morning – he must have borrowed it for the purpose, as he never wore one – as though to hint that he might even now order mobilisation at two P.M. Between sessions of this languid and untidy conference the ministers sprawled about on the sofas, or telephoned their capitals; at one time Daladier and Hitler were swapping anecdotes from the World War trenches, at another, Chamberlain was regaling him with weekend fishing tales.

At three P.M. Hitler retired to his apartment for lunch with Himmler and the Italians.

He fumed at Chamberlain's obstinacy: 'Daladier – now there's a lawyer who sees things as they are and draws the proper consequences. That Chamberlain however – he has haggled over every village and petty interest like a market stall-holder, far worse than the Czechs would have been! What has he got to lose in Bohemia? What's it to do with him!' Hitler burst out, 'I never have weekends – and I hate fishing!'

The taste of victory was turning bitter in his mouth. 'It's time Britain stopped playing governess to Europe,' he complained. 'If she can't drop her guardian act, in the long run war can't be avoided. And I'll fight that war as long as you and I are still young, Duce, because this war will be a gigantic test of strength for our two countries.'

The conference resumed later that afternoon. In the small hours of the morning, the Munich Agreement was signed.

BEFORE HE left, Chamberlain asked if he could see Hitler. Hitler waited at his apartment in Prinzregenten Platz with some curiosity – not to say impatience, because the elevator bringing up the Englishman wheezed to a halt between floors. Chamberlain asked Hitler for an assurance that – if the Czechs were so vainglorious as to reject the Munich Agreement – the German air force would not bomb civilian targets. Hitler gave it. Then Chamberlain produced a sheet of paper containing a typed declaration, and asked if Hitler would sign it, saying that this would considerably ease his position

in London. Hitler signed it without noticeable enthusiasm. It concluded with the words,

> We regard the agreement signed last night and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement as symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again.

After the Englishman had left, Ribbentrop came over to the Führer Building. Walking down the long flight of steps with him afterward, Ribbentrop mentioned that he was not sure Hitler had been wise to sign such a document. Reinhard Spitzy overheard Hitler's muttered response: 'Ach, that piece of paper is of no further significance whatever.'



Neville Chamberlain at Munich airport with Reich foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, September 1938 (WALTHER HEWEL)

One Step Along a Long Path

Hitler left Berlin on October 2, 1938, with Brauchitsch, Milch, and Todt, for a flying tour of the newly regained Sudeten lands. Tumultuous crowds in the ancient marketplaces of Asch and Eger cheered his victory. 'Its scale was brought home to me,' he would crow, five weeks later, 'only at the moment I stood for the first time in the midst of the Czech fortress line: it was only then that I realised what it means to have captured a front line of almost two thousand kilometres of fortifications without having fired a single shot in anger.' 'We would have shed a lot of blood,' he conceded privately to Goebbels.

In fact it had not been a bloodless victory for Hitler. Henlein's Free Corps had lost a hundred men in their two hundred commando raids. As Hitler drove on from Asch and Eger some towns looked as though a full-scale war had hit them: buildings were wrecked, telephone lines were down, there was broken glass everywhere, and there were food lines and mobile kitchens. The armed Free Corps irregulars that they met looked tough, to say the least – 'not the kind of people to run into on a dark night,' one German officer noted.

Hitler's thoughts were never far from the unconquered rump of Czechoslovakia, out of which Chamberlain and Munich had, he considered, temporarily cheated him. Prague had been the seat of the first German university; Bohemia and Moravia were in the First Reich. The ill-fitting frontiers of Central Europe gave Hitler headaches for some weeks. The Poles not only occupied Tesin but claimed Moravian Ostrau and the important and largely German-speaking towns of Witkowitz and Oderberg as well.

Hungary had hedged her bets until too late. When she now bestirred herself and raised demands on Slovakia and the whole of the Carpatho-Ukraine, Hitler refused to listen. His governing ambition that

winter was to occupy Bohemia and Moravia. Promoting Slovak independence was one cheap way of bringing about the disintegration of Czechoslovakia. Having decided upon this, Hitler was able to use robust language in rebuffing Hungary's demands on Slovakia. When Kolomán Darányi, the former Hungarian premier, brought a private letter from Horthy appealing for support on October 14, Hitler would only say, in effect, 'I told you so.' Hewel's note of the meeting reads:

> The Führer recalled how strongly he had warned the Hungarians, both on board ship [in August] and when Imrédy and Kánya had visited him at the Obersalzberg [in September]: he had told them specifically that he was planning to settle the Czech problem *so oder so* in October. Poland had seen her chance, struck out, and got what she wanted. You can solve such problems by negotiation only if you're determined to fight otherwise. It was only this that gained for him, the Führer, everything that he wanted. Mr. Kánya was plagued by misgivings however, even though the Führer had *told* him that Britain and France weren't going to fight.

By mid-October Hitler was telling Darányi, 'The Slovak leaders of every political hue have been besieging us for days, clamouring that they don't want to join Hungary.' This was very true. On September 25 the Slovak engineer Franz Karmasin, leader of the Carpathian German Party, was to be seen at Göring's forest mansion Carinhall. Karmasin arranged for the Slovak deputy prime minister, Dr. Ferdinand Ďurčanský, to see Göring on October 12; the prime minister assured the German field marshal that his people never wanted to join Hungary – that only the Slovak Jews opted for Hungary. 'Slovaks want complete autonomy with strong political, economic, and military dependence on Germany,' he said. He assured Göring that Slovakia would deal with the Jewish problem on similar lines to Germany. Göring afterward noted for the record, 'Slovak aspirations to autonomy are to be suitably supported. A Czecho- without the Slovakia will be thrown even more cruelly onto our mercy. Slovakia will be very important to us as an airfield base for operations to the east,' meaning into Russia.

The Czechs too now turned to Hitler for protection. Beneš fled to the United States and moderates replaced his ministers, anxious to curry favour with Hitler. Even so, Hitler dismantled 'Green' only most reluctantly. Keitel's adjutant recorded one telephone call from the Führer's staff thus: 'Schmundt inquires how soon "Green" could be ready for launching again,

and how long for "Red"?' ('Red' was the build-up against France.) the now-hyphenated Czecho-Slovakia was still a matter of military concern. She could still engage up to twenty-five German divisions. Politically she was not the threat she had once been however. On October 12 the Czech envoy Voytěch Mastný assured Göring privately that his country had done a 'complete about-turn' – Czecho-Slovakia would realign her foreign policy with Germany, follow the Reich's lead on dealing with Jews and Communists, and provide industrial support to Germany. 'Fate and life of *Tschechei* are in Germany's hands,' Göring wrote afterward in a contented diary entry. '[Mastný] pleads that the country not be reduced to penury.'

Nonetheless, when the new Czech foreign minister František Chvalkovský visited Hitler two days later the Führer put on one of his famous acts. The Czech's own notes read: 'He [Hitler] did not conceal that he was not one to be trifled with, and that the final catastrophe would crash down on our state like a clap of thunder if we ever stepped out of line and returned to our old bad ways. Twenty-four – eight; snapped his fingers.' (Hitler threatened to destroy Czechoslovakia in twenty-four or even eight hours, and snapped his fingers to illustrate his point.) 'As for a guarantee, he said, the only guarantee worth anything was a guarantee from him: and he was not going to give one [to Czechoslovakia] so long as he saw no point in it.'

HITLER HAD returned that morning, October 14, 1938, from a second heavily publicised tour of the West Wall which had begun on the ninth at Saarbrücken. It was there that he had struck his first blow at the spirit of Munich, in a speech to West Wall workers. He had announced that he did not intend to drop his guard since, in democracies, statesmen who worked sincerely for peace could always be replaced overnight by warmongers: 'It only needs Mr. Duff Cooper or Mr. Eden or Mr. Churchill to come to power in place of Chamberlain, and you can be quite sure that their aim would be to start a new world war. They make no bones about it, they admit it quite openly.'

Coming so soon after Munich the tone of this speech was a setback for the Chamberlain government in London. Hitler expressed regret to François-Poncet a week later however that he had ever signed Chamberlain's 'piece of paper.' Dealing with the French, he flattered the ambassador, you could always expect an honest yes or no. 'With the English, however, it's different. You give them a paper. There's a storm of debate, then billions for rearmament and you're no better off than before.'

For some time he could undertake no further grand adventures anyway. He could not afford to. Despite the economic difficulties however he continued the immense new arms effort, suspecting that Britain was merely playing for time. The Forschungsamt wiretaps suggested that both Paris and London were trying to sabotage the Munich Agreement. At Munich, Hitler had deduced that Germany would be at war with Britain by 1942. Even before leaving Munich, on September 30, Keitel had telephoned instructions to his chief of arms procurement, Colonel Georg Thomas, to act on this assumption. Ammunition enough could be manufactured when the time came: what Hitler needed to stockpile now were new tanks, guns, and aircraft. He ordered Göring to launch a 'gigantic Wehrmacht rearmament program,' one that would put all its predecessors into the shade. Göring, of course, put his air force first: the Luftwaffe was to be increased five-fold. The Luftwaffe's plan was approved by Göring later that month. It emphasised the role of the four-engined Heinkel 177 heavy bomber; the goal was to provide four wings – *Geschwader* – of these by 1942, a total of some five hundred planes.

The navy submitted a more cautious plan, for completing two more battleships, more submarines, and various lesser warships by the end of 1943. Admiral Raeder showed the plan to Hitler on November 1. Hitler tore it to pieces, scathingly criticising the puny armament and armour of the two new battleships *Bismarck* and *Tirpitz*, and he lost his temper altogether when Raeder calmly advised him that most of Germany's other warships were wholly unsuited to naval war with Britain. No longer did Hitler fob him off with glib assurances that Britain would not fight. He insisted on the strictest adherence to the naval expansion program laid down, 'as a matter of extreme urgency,' and warned that he wanted 'certain additional ship-types of special value and importance for future war operations' incorporated in the program. The outcome of their meeting was the startling Z-Plan, under which the navy would build by the end of 1943 six battleships of 35,000 tons, armed with 420-millimetre guns. The Z-Plan would inevitably violate the Anglo-German naval agreement: but by the end of 1939 Hitler would long have revoked that 'piece of paper,' arguing that it had turned out to be a very one-sided concession indeed.

In the solitude of the Obersalzberg that fall of 1938 Hitler collected his thoughts. By October 17 he had mentally drafted his next steps. That evening, according to Fritz Todt's papers, he telephoned Todt in the Sudetenland and

'clearly specified how much work was to have been done [on the West Wall] by three target dates: the end of October, December 15, and March 20.'

François-Poncet flew to Berchtesgaden the next day, October 18, and reached the Berghof at three P.M. From there he was driven up to meet Hitler and Ribbentrop in a small side room of the spectacular mountain-top Kehlstein pavilion. The Führer now startled him by proposing an immediate pact with France. On this occasion, François-Poncet felt, it all rang true. 'He spoke of our "white culture" as a common and precious asset that had to be defended,' reported the Frenchman. 'He seemed genuinely hurt by the antagonism that persists even after Munich, and in his view Britain's attitude has made this abundantly clear. It is obvious that he is preoccupied with the possibility of a coming crisis and general war.'

The French ambassador probably deduced Hitler's intentions correctly, however, when he reported:

> We can be sure that despite all this the Führer is sticking to his intention of driving a wedge between the British and French and stabilising peace in the west only so as to have a free hand in the east. What plan is he already hatching in his soul? Is it to be Poland, or Russia? Or is it the Baltic states at whose cost these plans are to be realised? Does he even know himself?

Hitler resumed his playacting. Two days later he set off into the Sudeten territories again. He was to be seen leaving the hotel at Linz with Colonel Schmundt, the latter loudly lamenting that Munich had spoiled their plans for a fight. The whole party descended on a village inn for luncheon – Hitler surrounded by twenty people, elbow-to-elbow at the horseshoe table, while the villagers and kitchen staff gaped through the doors and windows. General Leeb jotted in his diary, 'Huge excitement amongst the population. Führer ill-disposed toward the British.' A lieutenant colonel, Helmuth Groscurth, noted in his report, 'There was a hail of attacks on the British, the French, and above all the Hungarians – who were dismissed as being cowards and skunks.' Hitler cruelly mimicked the gesticulations of the Hungarian ministers, while loudly praising the Poles. Poland, he said, was a great nation, and Joseph Lipski a fine ambassador.

At Krumau that day the roads were lined with delegations from the brewery town of Budweis. It had a large German population, but would be left stranded on the wrong side of the new Czech frontiers. They were

waving placards: 'BUDWEIS WANTS ITS FÜHRER!' Hitler however had not forgotten them.

ON OCTOBER 21, 1938 the Kehlstein tea pavilion witnessed a second remarkable scene. Magda Goebbels, the beautiful platinum-blonde wife of the propaganda minister, had come to pour her heart out to Hitler about her faithless husband.

Joseph Goebbels had captured Berlin from the Communists in the twenties; it was he who had created the 'Führer' image and converted the newspaper and film industries into potent instruments of Nazi policy. Hitler had admitted to Otto Wagener and his own secretaries that he was attracted to Magda; according to Otto Meissner's wife, Magda had once told her that her son Hellmut was in fact sired by Hitler during a 1934 Baltic vacation. (Judging by the pictures, this is improbable). By 1938, however, Goebbels was in disgrace. Himmler had furnished to the Führer a Gestapo dossier of statements by women who claimed to have been sexually coerced by Goebbels. 'We used to sound off against Jewish bosses who molested their female employees,' protested Himmler. 'Today it is Dr. Goebbels.'

For two years Goebbels had been conducting a secret liaison with a Czech actress, Lida Baarova, a female of great bearing and physical allure. All Germany relished the titbits of the affair. In August, Magda had told Hitler that she wanted a divorce, but he refused to hear of such a thing in Nazi Germany's 'happiest family.' He had lectured the unhappy Dr. Goebbels on August 15, and told him never to see the actress again. ('It shakes me to the core,' the little doctor had entered in his diary. 'I am deeply moved by it. The Führer is like a father to me. I am so grateful to him. I take grim decisions. But they are final.') Now, on October 21, Magda brought her complaints to Hitler again, alone, and demanded permission for a divorce.

Up at the Kehlstein pavilion Hitler persuaded her to refrain from taking action. Two days later he invited the Goebbels couple to the same teahouse (Martin Bormann embellished the conciliatory visit in his diary with an exclamation mark) and persuaded them to persevere for three more months, if only for their children's sake: he would agree to their divorce after that, if they still insisted. 'The Führer,' the propaganda minister now penned in his diary, 'detains me for a long time alone. He confides to me his most profound and innermost secrets. . . . He sees a really serious conflict brewing in the none-too-distant future. Probably with Britain, which is steadily preparing for it. We shall have to fight back, and thus will be decided the he-

gemony over Europe. Everything must be geared to that moment. And this must take precedence over all personal hopes and desires. What are we individuals compared with the fate of great states and nations?'

Smarting under Hitler's reproaches, Goebbels privately resolved to do something spectacular to regain the Führer's favour.

THE GERMAN army's reactionary behaviour before Munich was still a source of bitterness to Hitler. (Blomberg had once told him, 'In the army, obedience stops from generals upward.') That the military hostility should continue even after his bloodless triumph at Munich infuriated Hitler, and he decided to act. In mid-October Keitel's staff drafted a remarkable document designed to bring the Führer's views to the attention of all officers:

> The prerequisite for a state's political and military victory is obedience, loyalty, and trust in its leadership. As every officer knows, any body of soldiers without these qualities is useless. Indifference or half-hearted obedience are not good enough. They will not fire enthusiasm or inspire sacrifice and the dedication needed to master each successive task. It has always been Germany's lot to fight against unequal odds. Where we have been successful, then abstract forces were at work, acting far more powerfully than any numerical or material superiority over the enemy.
>
> It would be a remarkable thing if an officer's only duty were to weigh his own numerical strength against that of the enemy, while ignoring or underrating all those other factors that have always decided between defeat and victory in the past.

In an obvious reference to General Beck's arguments, the document continued:

> It is unsoldierly and a symptom of poor military upbringing not to credit one's own side with what one expects from the enemy as a matter of course, or to minimise one's own strength while inflating that of the enemy. To put the military factors in their proper perspective when deciding the political objective is a task for the statesman alone. Were he to wait until his armed forces were completely ready for war, then he would never act because armed forces are never ready – nor are they ever to be considered ready. I well know that in the past months the broad mass of officers has done its duty in a spirit of defiant belief and determination.

> But I expect this fact and its confirmation by our triumph [i.e., at Munich] to be accepted once and for all by my officers, and it is to be adequately emphasised in the training and preparation of new officers.

It was in this prickly mood that Hitler summoned Brauchitsch, as Commander in Chief of the army, to Berchtesgaden on October 24. The frosty interview began at 12:30 p.m. in the Great Hall of the Berghof, and continued after lunch until six up at the Kehlstein tea pavilion. It culminated in Hitler's demand for the retirement of scores of unreliable senior army officers. The tenor of the interview can be judged from the following entry in the diary of Keitel's adjutant, Wolf Eberhard: 'Führer was brutally frank about his contempt for the military commanders: they need rapid and urgent reorganisation, show complete lack of confidence in the political leadership, and apprehensions about their own weakness. Enemy's strength is exaggerated. A last appeal to the Commander in Chief, Army, to get to grips with his job and act without delay. His "historic mission"!' Eberhard privately commented, 'Let's hope that this is the last time that the Führer has to use such language to his soldiers.'

The final list of names was thrashed out between Brauchitsch and Göring on October 28 and taken by the latter to Hitler two days later. Among those blacklisted were these generals: Curt Liebmann and Wilhelm Adam, Hermann Geyer and Wilhelm Ulex – and, of course, Rundstedt and Beck. On November 1, 1938, Hitler announced this upheaval in the army. He coupled it, perhaps tactlessly, with a wave of promotions in the Luftwaffe.

Early in November 1938 Hitler's uncritical loyalty to his Party henchmen was put to its most severe test – by an incident symptomatic of racial troubles that had been festering in Central Europe for many decades. The Jewish problem was at its root. In Czechoslovakia, for instance, there were 259,000 Jews; they were not popular, and the new regime steered a delicate course, pandering to its powerful neighbour. President Emil Hácha, the venerable lawyer who had succeeded Beneš, initiated a series of anti-Jewish measures, obliging Jewish industrialists to resign. The influx of Jewish refugees from the Sudeten territories led to fresh antisemitism, particularly among the Czech academics who publicly demanded the removal of these 'immigrants.' In Bohemia and Moravia there were about 99,000 Jews; in Slovakia 87,000, and in the tiny Carpatho-Ukraine no fewer than 66,000 (or 12 percent of the population.) Slovakia eagerly enacted the

anti-Jewish decrees that the Reich demanded. A wave of deportations began.

Nobody, however, wanted to house these homeless Jews. When Ribbentrop journeyed to Paris with much pomp in December to sign the joint declaration that Hitler had first suggested to François-Poncet, foreign minister Georges Bonnet begged him not to flood France with German Jews, as they already had enough Jews of their own. ('In fact,' Ribbentrop informed Hitler, 'they are considering Madagascar for this purpose.')

Poland's attitude was no more sympathetic. Ambassador Joseph Lipski had assured Hitler as recently as October 21 that if he ever succeeded in solving Europe's Jewish problem, Warsaw would happily erect a statue in honour of his achievement. The Polish government had followed developments throughout 1938 most closely. Fearing, after Hitler's occupation of Austria, that he would repatriate the thousands of Polish Jews from Vienna, in March they had speedily enacted a Law of Expatriation designed to deprive such Jews of their native Polish citizenship. The Munich agreement panicked Warsaw into the further ruling that after October 31 no expatriate Poles would be allowed back into their country without a special entry visa. The last days of October thus saw frenzied scenes on the frontier. While Polish frontier officials slept, the Nazis quietly shunted unscheduled trains loaded with Jews across the line into Poland.

From Hanover alone, 484 Polish Jews were 'repatriated' in this demeaning manner. Among them were the parents and sisters of a Jewish youth of seventeen then living in Paris, Herschel Grynszpan. On November 3, as Hitler was subsequently told, Grynszpan received a postcard from his sister briefly describing the family's 'repatriation' to Poland. He swore revenge – and decided to murder the German ambassador in Paris, Count von Welczek. Welczek being not available, on November 7 Grynszpan shot at Counsellor Ernst vom Rath instead.

At first the incident had not unduly aroused Hitler's temper. He made no mention at all of it in his speeches of the next few days. On the ninth, the March on the Feldherrnhalle was solemnly re-enacted in the annual ceremony at noon. Wreaths were laid in the temples of honour, where Hitler had decreed that his own body was one day to rest.

That evening he was in his modestly furnished Munich apartment in Prinzregenten Strasse when word arrived that Counsellor vom Rath had now died of his gunshot injury. According to Goebbels, he told Hitler that there had been anti-Jewish demonstrations in two provinces. His diary

records: 'The condition of the diplomat Rath shot by the Jew in Paris is still very grave,' and 'The German press opens up with a will.' Then he added that the Jews 'have a few things coming their way.' He received word of demonstrations in Kassel and Dessau, and of synagogues being set on fire. At five P.M. the official press agency announced that the diplomat Rath had died of his injuries. As Goebbels and Hitler left to attend the Nazi festivities in the old city hall, news arrived that the Munich police were cracking down on anti-Jewish demonstrations. Hitler ruled, said Goebbels later, that the Party was not to organise any such demonstrations – but under the circumstances it was not to quell them if they should occur spontaneously.

We have only Goebbels's word for this, quoted at a subsequent internal Party inquiry; in his diary he wrote, 'Colossal activity. I brief the Führer on the affair. He decides: Allow the demonstrations to continue. Hold back the police. The Jews must be given a taste of the public anger for a change.'

Goebbels then left Hitler as he had to speak to an assembly of Party notables in Munich's old city hall. The minister instructed his listeners, according to one version, that further such demonstrations were to be organised although the Nazi party must not appear responsible. In his diary, he proudly recorded his own leading role in what was to prove one of the most shameful episodes of Hitler's rule: 'A few gau officials get cold feet. But I keep pulling everybody together. We must not allow this cowardly murder to go unpunished. Let things run their course. The *Stosstrupp* [shocktroop] "Hitler" sallies forth at once to deal with Munich. And things happen right away. A synagogue is smashed to smithereens. I try to save it from the flames, but fail.' He continued: 'Over to gau HQ with [Gauleiter Adolf] Wagner. I now issue a detailed circular setting out what may be done and what not. Wagner gets cold feet and trembles for his [Munich's] Jewish shops. But I won't be deterred. Meanwhile the *Stosstrupp* goes about its business. And with no half measures. I direct [Werner] Wächter [director of the propaganda bureau] in Berlin to see that the synagogue in Fasanen Strasse is smashed.'

The responsibilities thus seem clearly defined. A subsequent action report by the leader of the SA Group *Nordmark* would state:

> At about ten P.M. on November 9 the need for the operation was put to a number of gauleiters assembled in the Munich Hotel Schottenhammel by an anonymous member of the Nazi Party's *Reichsleitung* (Reich directorate). I thereupon volunteered the services of my SA Group *Nordmark*

> to the gauleiter [of Schleswig-Holstein], Hinrich Lohse. At about 10:30 P.M. he telephoned his chief of staff in Kiel: 'A Jew has fired a shot. A German diplomat is dead. There are wholly superfluous places of congregation in Friedrichstadt, Kiel, and Lübeck; and these people are still trading in shops in our midst. We don't need either the one or the other. There's to be no plundering, nor any manhandling. Foreign Jews are not to be molested. If there's any resistance, use your firearms. The whole operation is to be in plain clothes, and is to be over by five A.M.'

Toward midnight Hitler prepared to leave his apartment for the spectacular SS swearing-in ceremony. Himmler of course was with him. Himmler's chief of staff Karl Wolff arrived with an indignant message from Heydrich at the Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten: the local Gestapo HQ had just phoned, reporting that Goebbels's district propaganda offices everywhere were whipping up anti-Jewish demonstrations and ordering the police – Himmler's police – not to intervene. Himmler turned to Hitler for guidance. Hitler replied that the Gestapo were to protect Jewish property and lives. It was clear to Himmler that the whole affair had come out of the blue to the Führer. After the midnight ceremony, back at his apartment, Hitler was informed at one A.M. by one of his Wehrmacht adjutants that the Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten had now telephoned to ask them to come and retrieve their baggage as the synagogue next door was on fire.

Julius Schaub, Hitler's personal aide-de-camp, wrote after the war a graphic account of the ensuing night of horror, but Goebbels's diary describes Schaub as being in top form, 'his old *Stosstrupp* past comes flooding back.' 'As I drive back to the hotel,' continues this entry, 'there is the sound of breaking glass. Bravo! Bravo! Like gigantic old kilns, the synagogues are blazing.'

Telephone calls began coming from private citizens reporting fresh outbreaks of arson and Jewish businesses being looted all over Munich. Perplexed, Hitler sent for SS Gruppenführer Friedrich Karl von Eberstein, the city's police chief, and ordered him to restore order at once. He telephoned Goebbels and demanded: 'What's going on?' He sent out Schaub and other members of his staff to stop the looting and arson. He ordered special protection for the famous antique dealers, Bernheimer's. At 2:56 A.M. a telex was issued by Rudolf Hess's staff as Deputy of the Führer – and was repeated to all gauleiters as Party Ordinance No. 174 – forbidding the arson: 'On express orders issued at the highest level of all there is to be no arson

or the like, whatever, under any circumstances, against Jewish businesses.'* At 3:45 A.M. the Berlin Gestapo repeated this prohibition. Goebbels, now in no doubt where Hitler's real favour lay, also spent the night on the telephone trying to extinguish the conflagration that his mischievous tongue had ignited.

The damage had, however, been done, and Ribbentrop left Hitler in no doubt of this. Hitler responded that he could not get rid of Goebbels now – not when he was about to need him more than ever. He did send for Goebbels the next morning, November 10, to discuss 'what to do next' – the minister used the word *nunmehr*, which implied an element of apprehension. Göring protested to Hitler that German insurance firms would have to pay the Jews compensation; the cost in foreign currency would be huge, as the broken plate-glass would have to be replaced with imports from Belgium. Hitler refused to discipline Goebbels as the Reichsführer SS demanded. Nor, except in the most savage instances, were the humble Party members who had actually committed the outrages brought to book, although ninety-one Jews had been murdered that night. Goebbels successfully argued, over lunch with Hitler, that the pogrom had shown international Jewry that Germans abroad were not fair game for Jewish assassins. 'This is one dead man who is costing the Jews dear,' Goebbels gloated in his private diary. 'Our darling Jews will think twice in future before simply gunning down German diplomats.'

There was trenchant criticism of this Goebbels extravaganza from every other leading Nazi (except Hitler himself). 'The order was given by the Reich Propagandaleitung [Goebbels],' recorded Himmler, 'and I suspect that Goebbels, in his craving for power, which I noticed long ago, and also in his empty-headedness, started this action just at a time when the foreign-political situation is very grave. . . . When I asked the Führer about it, I had the impression that he did not know anything about these events.' Hitler

* Some writers now argue that the Nazis had fallen into a Zionist trap. The Haganah officials with whom Adolf Eichmann negotiated on his trip to Palestine in November 1937 had hinted that it would serve their interests if things were made hot for Germany's Jews, to accelerate Jewish emigration to Palestine. It deserves comment that Grynszpan, although a destitute youth, was able to reside in a hotel in 1938 and purchase a handgun for 250 francs, and that his defence counsel Moro Giafferi was the best that the money of the International League against Anti-Semitism ('LICA') could buy; LICA's Paris office was around the corner from Grynszpan's hotel.

post facto endorsed the excesses of his henchman. When Göring sent him a sharp letter of protest Hitler replied that he should drop the matter; but as a sop to him he appointed the field marshal to co-ordinate all further moves in the Jewish problem. A collective fine of one billion marks was imposed on the Jewish community for the murder. After Hitler returned to Berlin on November 15, Goebbels smugly entered in his diary: 'He's in fine fettle. Sharply against the Jews. Thoroughly endorses my,' a Freudian slip which at once expanded to, 'and our, policies.'

OVER THE next days, Hitler was frequently seen and photographed with Goebbels. In his eyes Goebbels was one of the unsung heroes of the Munich Agreement. In a long and astoundingly frank secret speech to four hundred Nazi editors in Munich on November 10, he had cynically explained to them just how much he owed to psychological warfare. He spoke of his admiration for Ribbentrop too. 'Even Bismarck had to battle against bureaucracy,' he said. 'Today's National Socialist government is still stifled by red tape. It is at its worst in the foreign ministry. Diplomats do not represent their own countries, but an international Society clique. This malady in our foreign ministry cannot be rooted out overnight. It will take ten or fifteen years until a new generation of National Socialist-trained diplomats is ready. So far, the first and indeed the only diplomat to do the Third Reich proud overseas has been Ribbentrop. He is the ideal image of what I, as Führer, think a diplomat should be. In these last few months he has shown that he has energy, toughness, courage, and nerve.'

Hitler's innermost thoughts still revolved around Bohemia and Moravia. Occasionally, these thoughts bubbled like marsh gas to the surface. Over dinner in Nuremberg on November 14 with a dozen local Party officers, the talk turned to the immense Congress Hall being erected nearby; Hitler said that he needed large slabs of granite, and when somebody remarked that the richest quarries were in rump Czecho-Slovakia, Hitler chuckled and commented knowingly, 'One more reason!'

But over their next move he differed from Ribbentrop's advisers. Weizsäcker counselled the foreign minister early in December 1938 to divert Hitler's attention from the south-east to the north-east: let the Reich first acquire Memel and Danzig on the Baltic coast, and a broad strip of land across the 'Polish Corridor' to East Prussia. Poland, argued Weizsäcker, enjoyed little or no international sympathy at present. Hitler could shrink Poland to a manageable size and no other country would lift a finger to

assist her. Ribbentrop's reply was noncommittal, as even he did not know Hitler's inner intentions.

Not that Hitler was planning to seize rump Czecho-Slovakia by war, as he made plain during yet another tour of the Czech frontier fortifications early in December 1938. After once again lunching in a village inn, with forty Luftwaffe and army generals listening, he loudly discoursed on his intention of bringing Bohemia and Moravia into the Reich – but by political processes short of war. Ten days later, on December 17, Keitel confirmed Hitler's instructions to the Wehrmacht to prepare unobtrusively for a virtually unopposed occupation of rump Czecho-Slovakia.

HITLER WAS manifestly undecided over what step to take after that. Would he have to deal with the western powers before marching east? To Goebbels on October 23 at the Kehlstein tea pavilion, and again up there on October 24 to Ribbentrop, Hitler had intimated that war in the west seemed inevitable within four or five years. Meeting Keitel and Brauchitsch for secret talks at Goebbels's island villa on Schwanenwerder on November 16 – the chancellery was in the hands of Speer's builders – Hitler conjured further with this probability.

His western plans would depend on signing an alliance with Mussolini. Germany and Italy would then each tackle the western democracies in a different theatre of war – Italy's being the Mediterranean and North Africa. Hitler would tackle France first, he mused: her defeat would deny to Britain a strategic foothold on the European mainland. Swiss, Belgian, and Dutch neutrality would, he said, be respected. He was unimpressed by France's frontier fortifications. 'It is quite possible to penetrate her Maginot Line,' he declared. 'We have demonstrated this with our firing trials against the Czech fortifications, which were built in the same way as the Maginot Line.'

HITLER TALKED vaguely of plans for a Cabinet meeting in December, only to abandon the idea. He ordered Göring to convene and speak to the 'Reich Defence Council' instead. Göring did so, for three hours, on November 18, 1938: every Reich minister and state secretary was present, as were Brauchitsch, Raeder, Bormann, and Heydrich too. He announced that Hitler had decided to triple the Reich's armaments, but warned them that due to the events of that summer the Reich's economy was almost bankrupt. He added, 'The Führer's great architectural projects will still be worked on, as they are of moral and psychological value.' The only thing that would

tide the Reich budget over this immediate crisis was, ironically, the billion-Reichsmark fine levied on the Jewish community, explained Göring.

The clock was now ticking ever louder for the Jews. On January 5, talking with Colonel Jósef Beck, the Polish foreign minister, Hitler rather speciously regretted that the western powers had not entertained Germany's colonial demands: 'If they had,' he said, 'I might have helped solve the Jewish problem by making a territory available in Africa for resettlement of not only the German but the Polish Jews as well.' On the twenty-first, he uttered to the Czech foreign minister Chvalkovsky these ominous words: 'The Jews here are being destroyed [*werden vernichtet*].' The Czech replied sympathetically; and Hitler continued: 'Help can only come from the other countries, like Britain and the United States, who have unlimited areas which they could make available for the Jews.' In a major speech to the Reichstag on January 30, 1939, Hitler uttered an unmistakable threat:

> During my struggle for power, it was primarily the Jewish people who just laughed when they heard me prophesy that one day I would become head of state and thereby assume the leadership of the entire people, and that I would then among other things enforce a solution on the Jewish problem. I expect that the howls of laughter that rose then from the throats of German Jewry have by now died to a croak.
>
> Today I'm going to turn prophet yet again: if international finance Jewry inside and outside Europe should succeed once more in plunging our peoples into a world war, then the outcome will not be a Bolshevisation of the world and thereby the victory of Jewry, but the destruction of the Jewish race in Europe!

Accelerated by these ugly stimuli, the exodus of Jews from the Reich continued throughout 1939, to stop only in October 1940, by which time Heydrich had successfully evicted about two-thirds of them – about 300,000 from Germany, 130,000 from Austria, and 30,000 from Bohemia/Moravia; some 70,000 of them reached Palestine, through the unholy community of aims that had briefly existed between Heydrich's SD and the Zionists.

Hitler avoided the chancellery area in Berlin for many weeks, because it was teeming with Speer's construction workers. He dealt with affairs of state by telephone, usually from the Berghof. He had a constitutional duty to consider appeals for clemency in death sentences and to sign the execu-

tion warrants. In bygone times the condemned criminal had had the traditional right to see the Kaiser's signature on the warrant before being led to the scaffold. In Hitler's era the usages were less picturesque. A telephone call went from Schaub to Lammers in Berlin – 'The Führer has turned down the appeal for clemency' – and this sufficed to rubber-stamp a facsimile of the Führer's signature on the execution warrant. On one occasion the file laid before Hitler stated simply that the Berlin chancellery would 'take the necessary steps' if they had heard no decision from him by ten P.M. that night. Human life was becoming cheaper in Hitler's Germany.

The broader economic problems faced Hitler all that winter. A serious inflation had begun in May 1938. Blomberg later stated under interrogation that when he returned from his year's enforced exile in January 1939 he detected a great deterioration in living standards. By the end of 1938, 8,223 million Reichsmarks were in circulation compared with 5,278 million in March 1938 and 3,560 million in 1933. On January 7, 1939, Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, president of the Reichsbank, and seven fellow directors signed a stern warning to Hitler about the inflationary pressure resulting from recent 'foreign operations.' Hitler was shocked by this semi-mutiny. In a secret speech to his colonels in February he warned:

'There must be no possibility whatever for anybody even to think that there is some institution or other in Germany that has a different opinion from the one expressed by the Führer.' He already – correctly – suspected Schacht of maintaining clandestine contacts with foreign governments.* He summoned Schacht to the chancellery on January 19 and handed him a document announcing his dismissal. The economics minister, Walther Funk, a flabby homosexual, was appointed Schacht's successor. On the same day Hitler also disposed of his personal adjutant, Fritz Wiedemann, whom he suspected of leaking state secrets. Their final interview was brief and cruelly to the point. 'You always wanted to be consul general in San Francisco,' Hitler reminded Wiedemann. 'You've got your wish.'

It was at about this time that Keitel sent to Franz Halder, chief of the General Staff, a note that the army would have until 1943 to complete its expansion, and that there would be no mobilisations before then. On OKW

* Montagu Norman, Governor of the Bank of England, 1920–44, told the U.S. ambassador in London that Schacht was his constant informant over sixteen years about Germany's precarious financial position (U.S. ambassador Joseph Kennedy reported this to Washington on February 27, 1939).

advice, Hitler decided to halt all army weapons production during 1939, to enable the Luftwaffe and naval construction programmes to go ahead. This would bring all three services to the same level by about 1944.

On January 17, 1939, Admiral Raeder brought the final draft of the navy's Z-Plan to Hitler at the chancellery. Ten days later Hitler issued an order assigning to this naval expansion program absolute priority over both other services. He again assured Raeder that he would not be needing the German navy for several years.

WHAT WOULD even the finest weapons avail Germany however if the generals were loath to use them? 'The brave will fight whatever the odds,' Hitler said on January 18. 'But give the craven whatever weapons you will, they will always find reason enough to lay them down!' This was the damage, Hitler felt, that Beck and his General Staff had inflicted on the officer corps. Early in 1939, he decided to repair it himself using his greatest gift – his power of oratory.

All his generals and advisers admitted that he had this power. He cast the same spell over mass audiences, whether he spoke from a carefully prepared script, which he had polished and trimmed far into the night, or *ex tempore*, timing every gesture and comic pause to ride the mood of his listeners. Nobody who attended Hitler's speech to newly commissioned officers in Berlin in February 1942, at the climax of the German army's desperate travails on the frozen Russian front, and witnessed the affection that he commanded – a grim-faced Hitler, checked in mid-exit by a sudden storm of cheering from the ten thousand army officers, which itself gave way to the spontaneous singing of the national anthem – nobody could doubt that Germany's leader cast a spell like few others in the past and certainly none since.

By rare fortune, the three secret speeches of January and February 1939 by which Hitler prepared his officer corps for war have survived. No brief extract can reproduce their flavour. They were of brutal frankness. Hitler set out the blood-racial basis of the Nazi *Weltanschauung*, the economic reasons obliging Germany to push further into Central Europe, and the inevitability of war. In this war he would expect his officers to serve him unswervingly, to die honourably, and to show true leadership to their men. His contempt for the old Reichswehr spirit was openly expressed, even in the first speech – to 3,600 army lieutenants packed into the Mosaic Hall of Speer's new chancellery on January 18, 1939, with the three Commanders

in Chief and Keitel in attendance. He demanded of them that they cultivate optimism, because pessimism was their worst enemy – it bred defeatism and surrender. 'What belief do I demand of you?' he challenged them. 'I demand of you, my young officers, an unconditional belief that one day our Germany, our German Reich, will be the dominant power in Europe, that no other power will be in a position to stop us, let alone to break us!' Ten minutes later he went even further: 'It is my unshakeable will that the German Wehrmacht become the most powerful force on earth.' Finally, he told them: 'Above all, my officers, you must be capable and inflexible even in adversity. True soldiers are not recognized by their victories, but after their defeats.'

His second speech was more of a lecture, delivered to 217 officers including all of Germany's senior generals and admirals on January 25. He held out the British Empire as an example to them, and the human qualities in the British that had won it.

> All of the world's empires have been won by deeds of daring, and lost through pacifism. If, in all the centuries of its existence, the British Empire had been governed by the forces and trends that it is now claiming to preserve, the Empire would never have been won in the first place.

Hitler held out to this audience the same fixed and final target – the new Reich as it would be someday. His legions would have one advantage over all the preceding German generations of warriors: 'They marched off toward a Dream Land which probably few could visualise and none was ever to see; while we have that target already in sight.'

The third speech was one that his chief adjutant Colonel Schmundt had urged upon him. Hitler spoke at six p.m. on February 10, 1939, to all the army colonels with active commands, behind closed doors at the Kroll Opera-house in Berlin. This time even his staff was astounded by his openness in revealing his future intentions. The Führer described his disappointment at some officers' lack of understanding for his actions in 1938, and he tried to show that Munich was just one of a carefully planned sequence of events. 'Even though 1938 has ended with perhaps the biggest triumph of our recent history, gentlemen, it is of course only one step along a long path that stretches out ahead of us.'

Some of his arguments were familiar – the need to prevent future German generations from starving, the fact that no future leader would possess



Münchener Ausgabe

Münchener Ausgabe

VÖLKISCHER BEOBACHTER

Der Führer vor dem ersten Reichstag Großdeutschlands

Eine der größten Reden Adolf Hitlers

Prophetische Warnung an das Judentum

Eindeutiges Bekenntnis zur deutsch-italienischen Schicksalsgemeinschaft

A tattered portent of things to come. The Nazi party newspaper of January 31, 1939 headlines 'One of the Greatest Speeches of Adolf Hitler,' who had uttered a 'Prophetic Warning to the Jews' (AUTHOR'S COLLECTION)

even a semblance of his authority and that, numerically superior though Germany's opponents might be, they were not racial entities. Their task now, he said, was no less than to repair three centuries of decay. Since the Peace of Westphalia, Hitler argued, Germany had declined to political impotence. Now, in 1939, he had brought Germany once more to the very threshold of a new age. 'Take my word for it, gentlemen, my triumphs these last few years have only resulted from grasping sudden opportunities. . . . I have taken it upon myself to solve the German problem.' He continued, 'That is, the German space problem. Take good note of that: as long as I live, this ideal will govern my every action. Take heed too: the moment I believe that I can make a killing I shall always strike immediately, and I shall not hesitate to go to the very brink. I am convinced this problem has to be solved *so oder so*, and I shall never shrug my shoulders and say, "Oh dear, I'll leave that for whoever comes after me".'

He told these Wehrmacht colonels that he wanted his officers to go into battle with sword and Weltanschauung as once they would have brandished sword and Bible:

> So don't be surprised if over the coming years I seize every opportunity to attain these German objectives, and please give me your blindest support. Above all, take it from me that I shall always have scrutinised these matters from every possible angle first – and that once I announce my decision to take this or that course of action, that decision is irrevocable and I shall force it through whatever the odds against us.

Thus spake Adolf Hitler to his Wehrmacht in February 1939.

Part II: Toward the Promised Land

COLONNA (*heimlich*):
Er ist der Götze dieses Volks,
das er durch Trug verzaubert hält.

RICHARD WAGNER'S OPERA *Rienzi*



The Nazi party rally of 1934 in Nuremberg: Hitler and Himmler review the troops of the SS Leibstandarte (HOOVER LIBRARY)

In Hitler's Chancellery

When Hitler had returned to Berlin on January 8, 1939, Speer's new Reich chancellery was complete. The long frontage of yellow stucco and grey stone dominated a quarter-mile stretch of Voss Strasse. Dwarfed by its tall square columns, the motionless grey-uniformed sentries melted into the buildings, invisible until they presented arms to passing officers. The four hundred rooms housed the Civil Service and the Party's organisation. To the left were the offices of Hans Lammers, to the right Otto Meissner's Presidential chancellery. On the top floor was Philipp Bouhler's 'chancellery of the Führer of the Nazi party.' Everywhere yellow signs pointed to air raid shelters. Little trace of Hitler's chancellery now remains – except the occasional red-marble planter or tabletop anonymously gracing the home of a former general or member of his staff.

The State Rooms were on the ground floor. Visitors arrived by limousine at the reception area, and were conducted through a flight of halls of ascending grandeur until the Führer's Study itself was reached, a large room with ponderous chandeliers and an immense pastel-coloured carpet. Three heads adorned the front panels of his great desk: one of them was Medusa, complete with writhing snakes emerging from her hair.

Yet Hitler himself was rarely seen in the new chancellery. He continued to live and work in the old building, which survived at right angles to Speer's new structure. Here, in the first floor of the old chancellery, he had his Residence. An entrance hall and 'garden room' with four more rooms opened onto an old garden of almost monastic solitude. Here was his equestrian statue of Frederick the Great – given to him by François-Poncet – and the Lenbach portrait of Bismarck. In this building too was Hitler's real study. Its walls were hung with wallpaper of a heavy red velour. A sturdy suite of

chairs by Troost had replaced the fragile Louis XIV furniture after a misfortune with a bulky Indian maharaja four years before.

On January 12, 1939, an episode of some significance occurred in Speer's new building during the New Year diplomatic reception which – with Göring's birthday celebration – opened the year for Berlin officialdom. Wearing his brown Party tunic Hitler waited in his Cabinet room. He could hear the diplomats arriving – the drill of the guard of honour and the familiar sounds of protocol. He had begun to relish this foppery; in July 1938 he had instructed that the Egyptian minister was to be received with a full guard of honour, while the Soviet ambassador was to be accorded no honours at all, as befitted the pariah that he was.

At noon Hitler now walked through to the great reception hall, where the diplomats had drawn up in a self-conscious semicircle, and stationed himself beneath the two crystal chandeliers so that he could read his speech without spectacles. He briefly shook hands with each diplomat in turn, but when he reached the Russian, Alexei Merekalov, he paused and *began a conversation*. In the jealous diplomatic world the content was unimportant – it was time elapsed that mattered. Hitler talked to Merekalov for several minutes. In this way he hinted to Moscow that he could easily let bygones be bygones. (Hitler would brag to his generals on August 22, on the eve of his historic deal with Stalin, that he had begun working for it at this very reception.)

For two decades Russo-German relations had been marked by mutual distrust. The cautious co-operation launched in 1922 at Rapallo had survived until 1933: Germany had furnished special equipment and know-how; Russia, raw materials and space for the clandestine training of the Reichswehr. The Reichswehr had supplied the Russians with German training manuals, weapons prototypes, and staff college training in Germany. The Nazi revolution of 1933 had momentarily thwarted Moscow's aspirations in Germany – Adolf Hitler was, after all, the author of *Mein Kampf* and Chapter 14 continued to appear unamended, laying bare his undimmed hatred of the Soviet Union and his aims for conquest there. Hitler quietly admired Stalin – how Bolshevism had subjected the Slav sub-humans, as he called them, to 'the tyranny of a Jewish ruling clique,' and established precisely the kind of elite leadership with which he was struggling to invest Germany.

Each side continued however to prepare for war with the other. In March 1936 Hitler openly told the Reichstag about the unending fertile plains of

the Ukraine in which the Germans would one day 'wallow in plenty.' In his 1938 secret speeches, he always referred to the Soviet Union's military power as a *quantité négligeable*. But with the realisation that Poland was unwilling to become an accessory, it dawned on Hitler that Stalin's aid might become useful.

Since Munich, Hitler had cautiously stated his first demand on Poland – for the return of Danzig and overland access to East Prussia. But Poland had rebuffed him. Hitler could not shelve the Polish problem permanently. East Prussia was vital to his *Ostpolitik* – his future crusade into the east. Its capital, Königsberg, was German through and through: in its fourteenth-century cathedral rested the bones of philosopher Immanuel Kant and many a Hohenzollern prince. But the province had an impoverished and declining population (a consequence, he reflected on May 12, 1942, of earlier Prussian governments' folly in regarding it as a penal colony for teachers, civil servants, and officers who had failed to make the grade at home). It is significant that Hitler tackled this deficit on February 1, 1939, with a secret decree on the 'Reinforcement of the Eastern Borderlands,' and with economic measures calculated to reverse the drain of manpower and capital from East Prussia.

Meanwhile he had long since sworn to recover Danzig, a 'northern Nuremberg,' for Germany. He wore the Danzig emblem – a silver ship sailing on blue waves – engraved on his cuff links. He had nurtured the hope since September 1938 that he could do a deal with Poland for the bloodless return of Danzig in exchange for the Carpatho-Ukraine coveted by Poland. Ribbentrop had aired this idea to the Polish ambassador, Joseph Lipski, on October 24. Lipski had replied evasively. Undismayed, Hitler had invited the Polish foreign minister, Colonel Jósef Beck, to come in the New Year. Their secret meeting took place at the Berghof on January 5, 1939: Beck refused to rise to his bait. This was why Hitler left for Berlin two days later resolved to play for Stalin's hand instead. His protracted dalliance with Merekalov was the first move; a conspicuous abstinence from attacking the USSR in his anniversary speech on January 30 was the second.

In Berlin Hitler kept relatively regular hours, receiving individual Cabinet ministers during the morning, then lunching as late as three or four. He joked that his dining room ought to be called 'The Cheerful Chancellor's.' Women were excluded. This lunch-table assembly was in fact the closest that he came to holding a Cabinet meeting after 1938 (though once, in

February 1939, he did agree to Lammers's suggestion that one should be called: but Göring was away in Italy, recovering from a slimming cure, and the project was abandoned). Todt's diary shows he came nine times (including once, on January 27, 1939, to show Hitler the planning for the immense Hamburg suspension bridge).

After lunch Hitler read newspapers, bought by an aide each day from a kiosk at the nearby Kaiserhof Hotel. In earlier years he had taken tea in the Kaiserhof: as he entered, the little orchestra would strike up the 'Donkey Serenade,' his favourite Hollywood movie tune. He was, he confessed, a fan of Shirley Temple and Jeannette Macdonald. He saw whatever films he liked, but he kept up a running commentary of invective unless the movie found his favour right from the first reel: 'What filth this is! It should be suppressed.' 'How can the Doctor permit a film like this! Who directed it?'

The Führer's SS adjutants dutifully compiled a list of his pithy one-line reviews and sent them to the propaganda ministry. His edicts had the weight of law – and woe betide a film that attracted the Führer's ultimate reproof 'broken off in mid-film.' *Prairie Hyenas*, *Tip-Off Girls*, *King of Arizona*, *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife*, *The Great Gambini*, *Shanghai* – all these movies came to an unscripted end in Hitler's chancellery. When *Marie Antoinette* was shown, he got up and stalked out.

He was uncertain over his next move. 'Perhaps,' wrote Goebbels on February 1, 1939, 'it's the Czechs' turn again.' Over lunch the next day the minister observed Hitler thinking out loud: 'He is hatching new plans again,' he recorded. 'A real Napoleon!'

On the thirteenth Hitler's special train bore him toward Hamburg. Here the largest Nazi battleship, 35,000 armour-plated tons, was waiting to be launched. First, in quiet homage, he visited in nearby Friedrichsruh the tomb of Bismarck, the statesman whose name he had selected for the Reich's first super-warship. Next morning, as bands serenaded the fifty thousand spectators, a green ferry carried the Führer across the Elbe from the Saint-Pauli pier to the Blohm & Voss shipyard. In Hamburg a public holiday had been declared. The bands fell silent as Hitler marched to the tall scaffold and delivered his set speech, praising his great predecessor's works in founding the Second Reich.

Hitler had himself positioned every newsreel camera, and forbidden foreign newspaper reporters to attend. After ten minutes of his speech, a small red lamp glowed in his rostrum, warning that the last props were being hammered away and that the colossus was about to move. The new

battleship *Bismarck* rumbled down into the Elbe, to the strains of the German national anthem.

HOW REVEALING is Baron von Weizsäcker's private note on the Führer's fireside remarks after an intimate meal at the Bismarck shrine at Friedrichsruh on that day, February 13:

> For those of us who know that the rest of Czecho-Slovakia will be dealt its death blow in approximately four weeks' time, it was interesting to hear the Führer declare that he himself used to prefer surprise tactics but has now gone off them as he has exhausted their possibilities.
>
> The Führer sketched out the September crisis of last year thus: 'I owe my triumph to my unflinching stand, which left the other side with a whiff of war if I felt it necessary.'

The sequence for the likely invasion of Czecho-Slovakia had now evolved, and along with it a formula to make it palatable to the western powers. Weizsäcker himself, in an undated note, described the likely scenario: an artificially induced squabble splits Slovakia from the Prague government; Germany advises Hungary 'to restore order' in the Carpatho-Ukraine; Slovak government asks Hitler to guarantee its frontiers; Germans in Bohemia appeal for protection; ultimatum to Prague to sign treaty with the Reich, failing which the Wehrmacht will invade. Goebbels's propaganda machine puts the blame on the Czechs – stressing the moderation of the German action and listing similar episodes in history.

Since Munich Hitler's agents had burrowed deep into Slovakia's structure. Nameless agents of Himmler's SS, Goebbels's ministry, Göring's Four-Year Plan office, and the Nazi Foreign Organisation (AO) had fanned out across Slovakia. By January 21, 1939, when Hitler had a tough interview with the Czech foreign minister Chvalkovský, it was obvious that his decision had been taken. He demanded absolute Czech neutrality, and a considerable reduction in Czech forces. Chvalkovský promised compliance.

Voytěch Tuka, a Slovak agitator who had suffered long years of Czech imprisonment and had only recently been amnestied after the flight of Beneš, telegraphed to Hitler a fulsome appeal to protect the Slovaks, and accept them as the economic and cultural colleagues of the 'illustrious German nation.' On about February 10, Karmasin's men in Bratislava were confidentially tipped off that Hitler would topple the Prague regime in a

month's time. Tuka visited Hitler on the twelfth, and formally placed the destiny of Slovakia in his hands. 'My people,' he said, 'await their total liberation by you.'

Hitler dropped a series of powerful hints that Slovakia should declare her independence of Prague – the first stage in the scenario outlined (if not actually proposed) by Weizsäcker. Wilhelm Keppler sent his close associate Dr. Edmund Veesenmayer to Bratislava to tell the Slovaks to hurry, as 'otherwise Hungary will get our permission to occupy Slovakia at any time after March 15.' When Ďurčanský and his economics minister visited Göring on February 28, the field marshal greeted them with: 'Now what's it to be? When are you going to declare independence, so we don't have to turn you over to the Hungarians!'

What happened on March 10, 1939, found Hitler by no means unprepared. At 5:20 a.m. Walther Hewel was telephoned from Vienna with word that Czech troops had marched into Bratislava. Father Tiso, the Slovak prime minister, had taken refuge in a Jesuit college. Goebbels appreciated that this was the opportunity Hitler had been waiting for to 'solve the problem we left half-solved in October.' Hitler sent for him at mid-day, then for other ministers – Hewel's notes list conversations all morning between Ribbentrop, Heydrich, Schmundt, and Keppler. At 11:50 a.m.: 'Keppler telephones: Tuka arrested. Telephones cut off. Martial law. Troops marching in. Karmasin may have been arrested too.' At 11:55: 'I go to the Führer, inform Schaub.' At twelve noon: 'Phoned Chief [Ribbentrop]: is to come to Führer at once.' Keitel was also sent for, at one p.m. Hitler revealed that he had decided to march in to the rest of Czecho-Slovakia on the fifteenth and seize Prague. 'Our frontier must extend to the Carpathians,' recorded Goebbels, and he remarked: 'The Ides of March.'

> We're all very pleased [Goebbels continued in his previously unpublished diary], even Ribbentrop. The Führer shouts with joy. This is going to be a pushover. . .
>
> Late in the afternoon over to the Führer again. We infer from one report that before its arrest the Tiso regime appealed in despair to the German government. The actual text can always be obtained later. The Führer says, and rightly so, that you can't make history with lawyers. You've got to have heart, head, and courage – just what lawyers lack. In the evening, at my suggestion, the Führer visits the People's Theatre, to put up a façade.

To dampen foreign press alarm, Nazi editors were secretly briefed that morning to devote no more than two columns to the Czech crisis. During the coming night, Hitler's SS Lifeguards regiment (*Leibstandarte*) was alerted and issued with field-grey uniforms. In a secret speech to staff college graduates late on the eleventh Hitler explained, 'The structure of a state demands that the Herrenvolk does the organising, while a somewhat inferior mass of people – or let's call them an *undominating* kind of people – prostrate themselves to that leadership.' History, ventured Hitler, afforded more than one example of a relatively thin stratum of dominators organising a broad mass of slaves.

For some days there was confusion in Czecho-Slovakia. 'The attempt to whip things up with our SS has only partly succeeded,' wrote Goebbels. 'It looks as if Slovakia's not playing along.' He talked over tactics with Hitler on the twelfth. They agreed to keep the crisis off the newspaper front pages until Wednesday, the day chosen for the invasion. 'If only we had . . . an appeal for aid or military intervention,' sighed Goebbels. 'That would make it all so simple.'

They stayed up far into the night talking over their next steps. Ribbentrop warned Hitler that there was bound to be a conflict with Britain eventually. 'The Führer,' noted Goebbels, who played no part in the sometimes heated argument, 'is preparing for it, but does not consider it inevitable.'

The Czech president, Emil Hácha, appointed Dr. Karol Sidor to replace Tiso in Slovakia. Hitler sent his agent Keppler to its capital Bratislava. Keppler salvaged Tiso and brought him back to Berlin on March 13. Without beating around the bush, Hitler told Tiso to proclaim Slovakia's independence of Prague, and to do it now.

> Over to the Führer in the evening [wrote Goebbels]. He has received Tiso. Explained to him that Slovakia's historic hour has come. If they don't act they'll be swallowed up by Hungary. He is to think it over and go back to Bratislava. No revolution, it must all be constitutional and above board. Not that we expect very much from him. But that doesn't matter now. The Führer goes over his plan once more. Within five days the whole operation will be over. On the first day we'll already be in Prague. Our planes within two hours in fact. I think we'll pull it off without significant bloodshed. And then the Führer intends to take a lengthy political breather. Amen! I can't believe it, it's too good to be true.

Hitler ordered the Wehrmacht to stand by to invade at six A.M. on the fifteenth. The OKW drafted an ultimatum to present to the Czechs. At noon on March 14 Keitel reported to Hitler that the Wehrmacht was poised on the Czech frontier. Hitler debated with Goebbels the new statute establishing 'Bohemia and Moravia,' the old name Czechoslovakia was to vanish forthwith. Goebbels in turn instructed his staff to bone up on Germany's historic claim to these provinces, noting: 'We shall speak of Bohemia and Moravia as ancient German territories.' To stifle foreign criticism Hitler informed Prague that it would be to their 'great advantage' if Dr. Hácha, despite his age and infirmity, would travel to Berlin. At 2:15 P.M. the German legation in Prague confirmed that Hácha would come to Berlin that evening, but by train – his heart would not stand the strain of flying. Hitler confidently ordered the army to invade at six A.M., and instructed Keitel to return to the chancellery at nine P.M. Colonel Eduard Wagner voiced the relish of all the General Staff in a private letter that evening: 'I don't think that much will happen, and the foreign powers have expressed themselves disinterested. End of Czecho-Slovakia! – And they have been asking for it!'

Hitler ordered full military honours for the Czech president's arrival. Hácha's daughter was accompanying him as a nurse; Hitler sent an adjutant to fill her room at the Adlon Hotel with yellow roses, and placed a note there in his own handwriting.

Under cover of darkness, the first German armed units crossed quietly into Czecho-Slovakia. The SS Leibstandarte had instructions to infiltrate Moravian Ostrau before the rapacious Poles could lay hands on the modern steel mills at Witkowitz.

After dinner that evening, March 14, 1939, Hitler retired to the music room to watch the latest movie, *Ein hoffnungloser Fall* (*A Hopeless Case*). Shortly, Ribbentrop reported that Hácha's train had arrived. Hitler examined his fingernails and remarked that the old fellow should be allowed to rest an hour or two. It was not until about eleven P.M. that Meissner ushered in the diminutive Czech president. 'The Führer has them wait until midnight,' observed Goebbels. 'Slowly and surely wearing them out. That's what they did with us at Versailles. The tried and tested methods of political tactics.' Hitler ordered everybody out except Ribbentrop and Hewel, who took a written note of their discussion.

In a voice trembling with emotion Hácha delivered a long-winded speech on his career as a lawyer in the Viennese civil service; he had read of and

admired Hitler's ideas, he said, and he was sure that Czecho-Slovakia would be safe in the Führer's hands.

As the monologue continued, Hitler grew uneasy: 'The more Hácha rambled on about how hardworking and conscientious the Czechs were,' he would recall in May 1942, 'the more I felt I was sitting on red-hot coals – knowing that the invasion order had already been issued.' Hitler told him that at six A.M. the Wehrmacht would invade Bohemia and Moravia; but the country's autonomy was assured. If Hácha would sign on the dotted line, there would be no bloodshed. 'I'm almost ashamed to admit that we have one division standing by for each Czech battalion.'

Twice Keitel came in to interrupt him; twice Hitler nodded curtly. The playacting had effect. Hácha and his foreign minister retired to another room to consult Prague by telephone. The line was poor, the old man had to shout, and toward three A.M. he suffered a heart failure; it took an injection from Hitler's personal physician Professor Morell to revive him. The minutes were ticking past. Hitler reminded Hácha of the military situation; the Wehrmacht was already moving up. Göring, who had arrived hurriedly that evening from his vacation in San Remo, interjected that at daybreak his Luftwaffe would appear over the streets of Prague. Finally Hácha caved in.

The main agreement was signed shortly before four A.M. In a second document Hácha agreed to surrender all Czech aircraft and weapons immediately to the Germans. But there were still problems. Hitler demanded that Chvalkovský must countersign; Hácha obstinately refused.

The Führer would later recall having thought to himself, 'Look out, this is a lawyer you have facing you. Perhaps there's some law in Czechoslovakia that makes an agreement like this valid only if it *is* countersigned by the minister concerned!'

Hitler's guests left his study by one route, while Father Tiso, the Slovak prime minister, was ushered in by another and informed of the result.

After that Hitler must have sent for Wilhelm Keppler. Keppler wrote a few hours later to Himmler: 'When we were together with the Führer last night after the agreement had been signed, the Führer paid his particular respects to the men who risked their lives in highly dangerous missions at the front. Whereupon Ribbentrop declared that the whole job had been magnificently performed by the SS alone. . . .' For a few moments Hitler was alone. He turned, opened the invisible door behind his monolithic desk, and walked into the tiny office where his secretaries, Christa Schroeder and Gerda Daranowski, had been waiting for the all-night conference to

end. His eyes sparkled, and he laughed out loud. 'Well, children! *Now* put one here and one here,' he said, and shyly tapped his cheeks: 'One peck each!' The startled secretaries complied. 'This is the most wonderful day of my life,' Hitler explained. 'I have now accomplished what others strove in vain for centuries to achieve. Bohemia and Moravia are back in the Reich. I will go down in history as the greatest German of all time.'

As his invasion of Czecho-Slovakia began, at 8:02 A.M. Hitler's special train pulled out of Anhalt station. Hácha and his party were still sound asleep at the Adlon. Lieutenant Colonel Kurt Zeitzler of Keitel's staff kept Hitler briefed on the army's progress. By nine A.M. the German army was in the streets of Prague. There was no bloodshed. One road-bridge was barred by Czech patriots singing the national anthem; the German company commander tactfully halted his column until the anthem ended, and ordered the Present Arms.

At 2:03 P.M. Hitler's train reached the little Bohemian frontier station of Leipa, where Panzer Corps Commander General Erich Hoepner awaited him with Colonel Erwin Rommel (who was to command the 'Führer HQ'). To the consternation of Himmler and the security staff, Hitler decided to drive right on to Prague. At four P.M. the frontier barrier was raised for him to cross into Czecho-Slovakia, and in a snowstorm his convoy headed on to the capital. He stood in his open car, saluting as he passed his regiments. It was dusk when he arrived in Prague. At first nobody knew where Hácha's official residence, the Hradcany Castle, was. Hitler's drivers finally entered it through a gate in the rear. A palace flunky was found to guide them to a wing where these unexpected visitors might sleep, but Hitler did not rest yet. He began dictating a law establishing a German 'Protectorate' over Bohemia and Moravia. At two in the morning a cold buffet arrived, provided by the local German Centre. There was Pilsen beer: Hitler was prevailed upon to sample a small glass but he grimaced, did not finish it, and went to bed. The first that the citizens of Prague knew of his presence in their midst was next morning, when they espied his personal swastika standard beating from a flagpole atop the snow-bedecked palace roofs.

The initial reaction from London was that this was an affair that need not concern them. The British public however refused to swallow Hitler's 'annexation' of Bohemia and Moravia, and Chamberlain was obliged to deliver a strongly worded speech in Birmingham, demanding: 'Is this in fact a step in the direction of an attempt to dominate the world by force?' About a week later, however, Chamberlain reassured Hitler through a third party

that he quite sympathised with Germany's move, even though he was unable to say so in public, as he was being exposed to intemperate attacks by the Churchill clique.

The benefits of this new conquest well outweighed the western powers' opprobrium: control of Prague brought to Hitler the gold reserves needed to overcome the Reich's huge budget deficit, airfields to threaten Poland and Russia, and a front line shorter by one thousand miles to defend. It furnished to him Czech tanks, artillery, and aircraft; moreover it put Romania and Yugoslavia in his thrall, because their armed forces were largely equipped by the Skoda arms factory at Pilsen. Hitler's officers marvelled at his fresh accomplishment, and many of the weaker fry, who in harder times would sidle over to the 'resistance movement,' in March 1939 wrote admiring words in their private diaries and letters to their friends.

Surprisingly, the 'protectorate' brought blessings for the Czechs as well. Their economy was stabilised and unemployment vanished. Their menfolk were not called upon to bear arms in Hitler's coalition. Their armed forces were dissolved, and their officers were given state pensions on Hitler's orders, to purchase their dependence and complicity. The industrious Czechs accepted rich contracts from the Reich and learned eventually to cherish the *pax teutonica* enforced by Reinhard Heydrich in 1941. It was the peace of the graveyard, but Heydrich won the affection of the Czech workers to such an extent – for instance, by introducing the first ever Bismarckian social security and pension schemes – that 30,000 Czechs thronged into Wenceslas Square in Prague to demonstrate against his murder in 1942. The Czechs had not been required to sell their souls, and this was what Hitler had promised Hácha in Berlin. Hácha himself never felt any grievance. He inquired of Morell about the prescription he had been injected with and thereafter obtained a regular supply from Morell's pharmacy. He would die, forgotten, in an Allied prison in 1945; Tiso and Tuka were both hanged.

ON MARCH 16, 1939, Hitler's propaganda minister issued another confidential edict to Nazi editors: 'The use of the term Grossdeutsches Reich is not desired. This term is reserved for later eventualities.'

The next objects on Hitler's list of acquisitions were, of course, Memel, Danzig, and the Polish Corridor. Late on March 21, while Dr. Goebbels escorted Hitler to the theatre to camouflage what was going on, Ribbentrop issued a crude ultimatum to Lithuania to hand back Memel; the Lithuanian

foreign minister, Juozas Urbsys, was hurriedly summoned to Berlin and he signed the necessary papers after Ribbentrop and Weizsäcker had tightened the screw. Ribbentrop simultaneously summoned the Polish ambassador, Lipski, and restated the offer of October concerning Danzig. He even hinted that Slovakia might be the subject of later discussions with Poland – *after* the Danzig issue had been settled. While still awaiting Lithuania's response, Hitler meanwhile discussed with Goebbels the moves that would follow the return of Danzig: first he would seek a respite, to restore public confidence; and then he would raise the question of Germany's erstwhile colonies. 'Always the old one-two,' noted Goebbels admiringly.

Lipski betook himself to Warsaw to obtain a reply. 'He's going to try out a little pressure on the Poles,' wrote Goebbels, after talking with Hitler on March 24. 'And he hopes they'll respond to that. But we're going to have to swallow the bitter pill and guarantee Poland's other frontiers. It will all be decided very soon.' On the twenty-fifth Hitler privately reassured General von Brauchitsch that he did not want to resort to force against Poland. Brauchitsch's aide-de-camp noted Hitler as saying, 'The possibility of taking Danzig by military action will only be examined if L[ipski] gives us to understand that the Polish government will be unable to explain to its own public any voluntary surrender of Danzig, but that a fait accompli by us would help them to a solution.' It is evident that Hitler really did expect such an under-the-counter deal. On March 27, Admiral Raeder initialled a draft plan for Hitler to embark in the cruiser *Deutschland* and appear off Danzig with virtually the entire battle fleet: Hitler would go ashore by torpedo boat and proceed in triumph to the city centre. So much for planning – his actual entry into Danzig six months later looked very different.

Lithuania proved more accommodating over Memel. The ancient Teutonic city had been annexed by Lithuania after the Great War. Hitler anchored off Memel aboard *Deutschland* early on March 23, symbolically toured the city – with Rommel as HQ commandant, and Milch in lieu of Göring, who had returned to San Remo – and then went back to Berlin.

'What a week that was,' recorded Goebbels.

The Poles reacted to this new Hitler triumph truculently, by partially mobilising, as Canaris reported on March 25. When Hitler left Berlin that evening he explained, according to Brauchitsch, 'I don't want to be around when L[ipski] gets back. R[ibbentrop] is to deal with them initially.' Lipski duly returned from Warsaw on the twenty-sixth with a brusque rejection of the German demand for Danzig, to which he added the verbal warning

that if Hitler persisted it would mean war. 'The Polacks,' recorded an angry Dr. Goebbels, 'will always be our natural enemies, however keen in the past they have been, out of pure self-interest, to do us the odd favour.' On March 27 Weizsäcker summarised in his diary:

> It will no longer be possible to solve the Danzig problem, now that we have used up foreign political goodwill over Prague and Memel. A German-Polish conflict now would trigger an avalanche against us. For the time being the only way we can deal with the Poles' insolent attitude and their high-handed rebuff to the offer we have made to them is by breaking the Polish spirit.

Strolling on the Obersalzberg mountainside, Hitler pondered his next move, just as here in 1938 he had wrestled with 'Green.' On March 25 he had assured Brauchitsch that he would not tackle the *Polish* – as distinct from the Danzig – problem yet. There would first have to be particularly favourable political conditions: 'I would then knock Poland so flat that politically speaking we wouldn't have to take any account of her for many decades to come.' The Reich would thereby regain its 1914 eastern frontier, from East Prussia to eastern Silesia.

Meanwhile Stalin had delivered a stinging rebuke to the western democracies at a Moscow congress. Hitler studied the newsreel films and pronounced that Stalin looked quite 'congenial.' Late on March 30 he returned to Berlin.

In Berlin a rude shock awaited him: the next morning news arrived from London that Neville Chamberlain was about to announce in Parliament that 'in the event of any action which clearly threatened Polish independence and which the Polish government accordingly considered it vital to resist . . . His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Polish government all support in their power.'

This was the first of a sheaf of ill-considered guarantees to be uttered by the British. Its effect was not what Chamberlain had hoped for. At 12:45 p.m. Hitler sent for Keitel. Whatever the origins of England's guarantee, by the time Hitler left Berlin – that is, by 8:47 p.m. on March 31 – he had given the OKW orders to make all due preparations for war with Poland, under the code name 'White.' At Wilhelmshaven the next morning he launched a second 35,000-ton battleship: the *Tirpitz*.

It is to be emphasised that he had still not issued any actual instruction for war. This new OKW directive on 'White', issued on April 3, merely outlined a political situation which might make an attack on Poland necessary on or after September 1. Meanwhile, the OKW ruled, friction with Poland was to be avoided, a difficult injunction since the Poles had certainly not behaved kindly toward their own ethnic German minority. During April – and again in May – 1939 explicit directives went out to every Nazi editor not to draw comparisons between what was happening in Poland and what had happened in 1938 in Czechoslovakia.

Hitler probably hoped that 'whetting the blade' alone would force the Poles to think again. As General Walter von Reichenau had admiringly commented on October 3, 1938: 'If the Führer was a poker player, he'd win thousands of Reichsmarks every night!' In April 1939 this poker image also came to Baron von Weizsäcker's mind – the diplomat believed that Hitler was playing a game for high stakes, but would know how to pick up the winnings at just the right moment and quit. In mid-April he forecast privately, 'A creeping crisis, but short of war. Every man must do his duty.'

Curiously, Hitler had not consulted Göring over 'White.' The field marshal did not return from his Italian Riviera leave until six P.M. on April 18. He then appeared at Hitler's dinner table looking bronzed and fit. Hitler told him of his determination to force a settlement over Danzig. Göring was taken aback: 'What am I supposed to understand by that?' The Führer replied that if all else failed to regain Danzig, he was going to use force. Göring warned that world opinion would not stand for it. Hitler calmed him down, saying he had handled other situations skilfully in the past and Poland would be no exception.

At about the same time, Göring's aide, the Luftwaffe general Karl Bodenschatz, dropped a broad hint to the Polish military attaché that if Hitler believed that Germany was being encircled, then he would make an alliance with the Devil himself. 'And you and I are well aware of who that devil is,' threatened Bodenschatz, in a scarcely veiled reference to the Soviet Union. Initially, Hitler used his approach to the Kremlin only as diplomatic leverage against Poland, but there was no doubting Stalin's interest. One of Ribbentrop's Berlin officials, Rudolf Likus, reported on April 1 that the Soviet war minister, General K. E. Voroshilov, had suggested in a conversation with the wife of the German ambassador that Hitler and Stalin revise their attitudes toward each other. Shortly, Ribbentrop learned from the same official that a high Soviet embassy official had remarked that Ger-

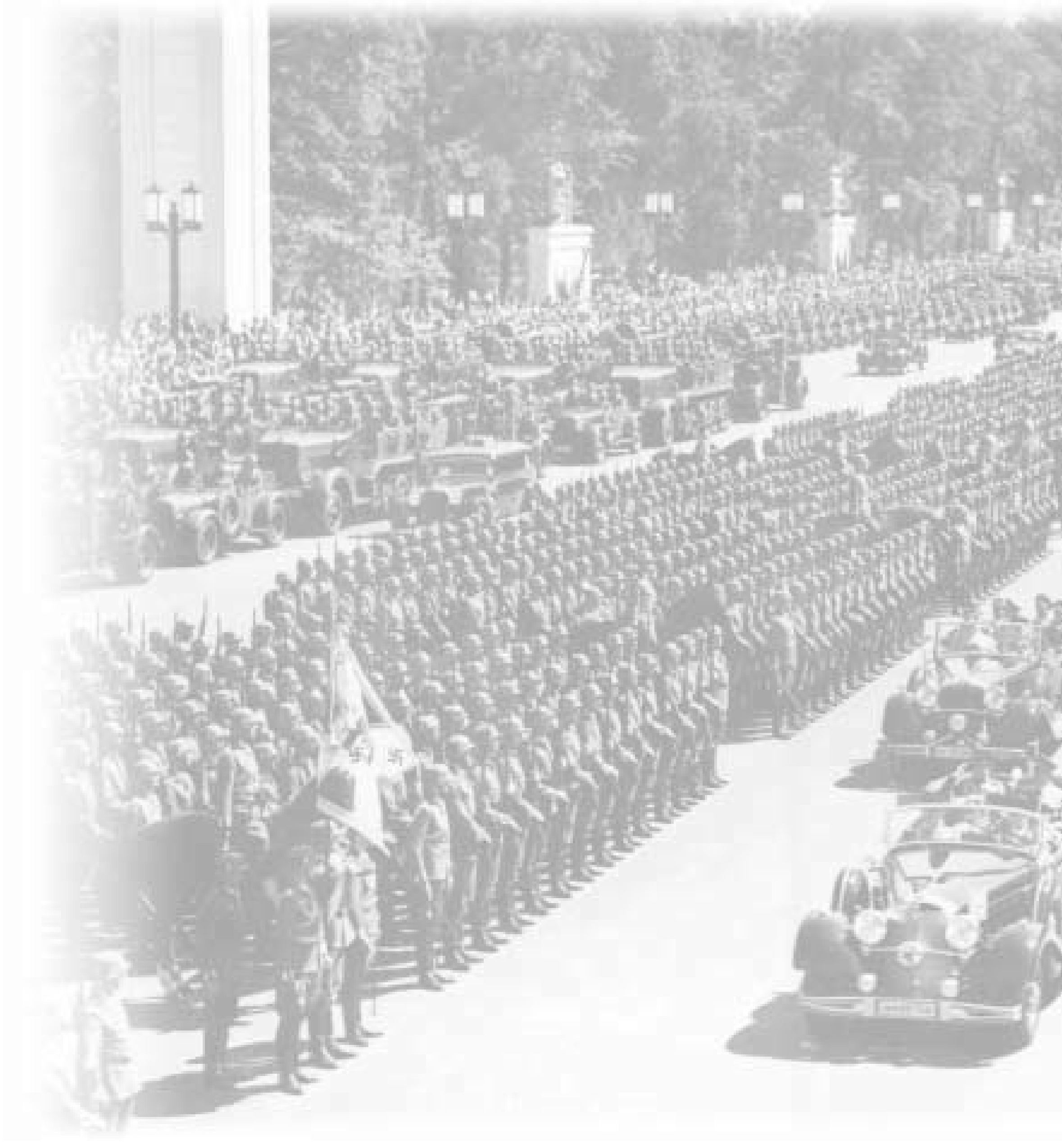
many and the Soviet Union could pursue a great policy 'side by side.' Hitler still hesitated to inch out further onto this thin ice, and Ribbentrop instructed his man not to pursue this dialogue.

At the end of April however Hitler omitted from yet another major speech the usual hostile references to the Soviet regime. Stalin responded on May 3 by dismissing Maxim Litvinov, the Jewish foreign minister who would have been an obvious obstacle to any settlement with Nazi Germany. At this, Hitler really sat up and took notice. He ordered key Moscow embassy officials back to Germany to report to him. The outcome of these consultations was an instruction to the German ambassador, Count Werner von der Schulenburg, to throw out cautious feelers to Vyacheslav Molotov, the new foreign minister, as to a possible rapprochement and the resumption of trade negotiations. On the fifth Goebbels confidentially instructed all Nazi editors that there were to be no diatribes against Bolshevism or the Soviet Union 'until further notice.'

On the following day Karl Bodenschatz again dropped a curious hint – this time to the French air attaché, Paul Stehlin. 'You'll soon find out,' the Luftwaffe general said, 'that something is afoot in the east.'



Hitler in the 1930s; a self-portrait found in his desk at the Berghof in 1945 by secretary Christa Schroeder (AUTHOR'S COLLECTION)



Fiftieth birthday parade, April 20, 1939 (AUTHOR'S COLLECTION)



Fifty

Most people measure their ages in years expired. Hitler mentally measured his in terms of the years still remaining to him. As he watched the weekly 'rushes' of the movie newsreels, he noticed that he was ageing. On April 20, 1939, he reached that plateau in life: fifty. Seldom had the world seen such a vulgar display of muscle as Nazi Germany staged to celebrate the Führer's birthday, with 1,600 Party notables crowding into the Mosaic Hall at one moment, and the Wearers of the Blood Insignia – veterans of the 1923 putsch attempt – milling around in the Marble Gallery at another.

While bands played the Badenweiler March that evening, in the mistaken belief that it was his favourite tune, Hitler drove with Speer along the fine new East-West boulevard and opened it as fireworks embroidered a huge image of the swastika flag in the sky. At one vantage point were mustered the surviving ex-soldiers of Germany's nineteenth-century wars – survivors of generations who had marched vainly toward that dreamland that was 'now in sight.'

When Hitler returned to his chancellery, hundreds of gifts were on display, including a model of the triumphal arch that he planned to erect on the new North-South axis. The names of all the German and Austrian dead of the Great War would be carved into its stone. His secretary Christa Schroeder wrote the next day:

> The number and value of this year's presents is quite staggering. Paintings by Defregger, Waldmüller, Lenbach, and even a magnificent Titian, wonderful Meissen porcelain figurines, silver table services, precious books, vases, drawings, carpets, craftwork, globes, radios, clocks, etc., etc., etc. . . . Of course there are model ships and aircraft and other

military paraphernalia too – those are the things he's happiest about. He's just like a boy with them.

From all over Germany units converged on Berlin for the birthday parade. Six army divisions, some 40,000 men with 600 tanks, were to parade past him. At eight A.M. he was awakened by the Lifeguards band playing a serenade outside his window. The children of the doctors and adjutants shyly came forward to wish him well, to give him posies of flowers that they had confected with Frau Anneliese Schmundt, his chief adjutant's wife, and to recite poems to him. Hitler wanted these children to have a day that they could remember to their grandchildren.

Before the military parade began, Hitler briefly received his three Commanders in Chief – Göring, Raeder, and Brauchitsch – with Keitel in his lofty panelled study. He stood with his back to his big desk as the officers were ushered in. Keitel stumbled slightly on the thick ochre-coloured carpet as they stationed themselves in line. Hitler's speech cannot have lasted more than ten minutes but, when he ended, all of this select audience recognised that Germany was heading inevitably toward war, not necessarily in 1939 – but soon.

The birthday parade itself gave vivid proof of Hitler's powers of physical endurance. For four hours the troops, personnel carriers, artillery, and tanks stomped, rumbled, and rattled past his saluting base. Secretary Christa Schroeder wrote afterward, 'Yesterday's parade was enormous and dragged on endlessly. . . . I keep wondering where on earth he finds the strength for it all, because to be on your feet for four hours on end, saluting, must be damned exhausting. We got dog-tired just from watching – at least I did.'

There is no doubt that in 1939 Hitler had the physical constitution of a horse. His medical files show that his veins were filled with type A blood. His skin was pale and fine in texture; on his chest and back it was quite white and hairless. His skull was of the kind that doctors classify as 'slightly dolichocephalic.' His face was pale and symmetrical, and his expression was regarded by his doctors as having 'an intense quality that subdued and captivated.' The left eye was slightly larger than the right, his eyes were blue, faintly tinged with grey. A minimal degree of exophthalmia, a protrusion of the eyeballs, was always present.

When questioned in 1945, the doctors who had treated Hitler were unanimous that he had been sane until the very end. One of them, Profes-

sor Hanskarl von Hasselbach, would subsequently observe, 'The German public would have been lunatic to have given their virtually unanimous support to any man such as Hitler is portrayed today.' There were virtually no clinical symptoms of abnormality. He showed no mental faults like inappropriate euphoria, incontinence, anosmia (loss of smell), or personality changes. Brain examinations disclosed no 'sensory aphasia' and no 'dream states.' Tests on his reflex centres and spinal root functions revealed no abnormalities. The doctors would put on record that his orientation as to time, place, and persons was excellent. Their report adds: 'He was changeable, at times restless and sometimes peculiar but otherwise co-operative and not easily distracted. Emotionally he was very labile – his likes and dislikes were very pronounced. His flow of thought showed continuity. His speech was neither slow nor fast, and was always relevant.' Common symptoms of insanity were absent. The doctors concluded that in Hitler 'no hallucinations, illusions, or paranoid trends were present.'

Who were these doctors? Dr. Karl Brandt had attended him since 1934. A handsome, dark-haired young surgeon with well-proportioned features, Brandt was born in the German Alsace but had been deported by the French as a boy of fifteen when they occupied the province in 1919. Brandt had a strict sense of propriety, refusing to discuss Hitler's sex life with his later American interrogators. He had studied surgery at a Ruhr hospital. His fiancée was the champion swimmer Anni Rehborn, one of the stars in the feminine firmament around Hitler in the twenties; she introduced him to Hitler in 1932. Hitler realised that a travelling surgeon might prove useful, and Brandt accompanied him to Venice in 1934. Brandt in turn introduced his Ruhr colleague, Professor Werner Haase, as his stand-in, and appointed Hanskarl von Hasselbach as his deputy on Hitler's staff in 1936.

Later that year another physician entered Hitler's circle, one who was to become the most controversial of Hitler's medical men. Three years older than Hitler, Dr. Theodore Morell was corpulent, with a bald head and swarthy complexion. His dark-brown eyes blinked myopically through thick-lensed spectacles; his hands were large and hairy. He had established himself as a leading doctor in the Kurfürstendamm world of stage and film stars. The film world introduced him to Hitler's photographer Heinrich Hoffmann, and it was in Hoffmann's home that Morell first met Hitler in May 1936. He found Hitler upset over the death from meningitis of his chauffeur, Julius Schreck, a few days before. Morell gave him the distinct impression that he, Morell, might have saved Schreck's life.

Hitler suffered from acute stomach cramps almost to the end of his life. On December 1, 1944, Morell would summarise this difficult patient's medical history thus: 'He has had really major spasms after violent emotional upsets – e.g., the 1924 [treason] trial, a matter of life and death; the 1929 due date on the loan to the *Völkischer Beobachter* and the Eher Publishing House; the 1935/36 crisis of military unreliability.'* In May 1936 Professor von Eicken examined him, and his consultation notes survive.

> *May 20.* Consultation at the Reich chancellery in conjunction with Dr. Brandt. [Führer suffering from] a roaring pain in the ears for several days, with high-pitched metallic sound in the left ear at night. Obviously overworked. Preoccupied (chauffeur Schreck!).
>
> Sleeps very little – can't get to sleep. [I recommend:] evening strolls before retiring to bed, hot and cold foot baths, mild sedatives! Time off. Always feels better at Wachenfeld [i.e., the Berghof].
>
> At Christmas 1934, Dr. Ernst-Robert Grawitz treated M.F. [mein Führer] for acute food poisoning with Neo-Balestol, which contains fusel oil. Headaches, giddiness, roaring in the ears.

That Christmas, Hitler invited the Morells to stay on the Obersalzberg with him. While the house party was distracted by a noisy contest at the Berghof's bowling alley, Hitler took Morell aside and recounted his sorry tale – how nobody could cure his terrible stomach cramps. 'You are my last hope,' he told Morell. 'If you can get rid of my stomach pains I'll give you a fine house.' Morell promised, 'I'll have you fit and well again inside a year.' The cure worked. Morell got the house, a fine villa on Schwanenwerder Island. And to Morell's subsequent detractors – who were legion – the Führer loyally pointed out: 'Morell made me a promise: one year . . .'

Morell's first clinical examination of Hitler on January 3, 1937, suggested that the stomach cramps were *not* of hysteric origin. There was severe eczema on the left leg, probably in consequence of Hitler's dietary

* A reference to the rivalry between the SS and the Wehrmacht in 1935 and the remilitarisation of the Rhineland in 1936. Morell's 1944 diary continued the summary: 'Added to this were the dysbacteria that the spasms probably generated. Further spasms in 1943 before his meeting with the Duce at Feltre [on July 18] at which time he already had a foreboding, or even foreknowledge, of the forthcoming betrayal by the Italian army; and more spasms in 1944 after the Bomb Plot.'

problems. 'Morell,' recalled Hitler in 1944, 'drew up a healthy daily routine for me, he controlled my diet, and above all he permitted me to start eating again. He went right back to first principles. First he examined my intestinal bacteria, then he told me my coli-bacilli would have to be replaced.' Professor A. Nissle, director of a bacteriological research institute at Freiburg, prepared a commercial medicine for treating this condition, called 'Mutaflor,' an emulsion of a certain strain of *coli communis bacillus* which had the property of colonising the intestinal tract. 'I was given these coli capsules and large quantities of vitamins and extracts of heart and liver,' Hitler recounted. He began to feel better. Morell moved in to the Berghof. 'After about six months,' said Hitler, 'the eczema had gone and after nine months I was completely well again.' In September 1937, Morell was an honoured guest at the Party rally: Hitler could wear boots again.

Morell began treating Hitler with medicines that he had devised himself and was manufacturing in one of his pharmaceutical companies.* Hitler paid him an annual retainer of 36,000 Reichmarks. Hitler's coterie rushed to become Morell's patients – Funk, Ley, Speer, Goebbels, the Ribbentrops, all Hitler's older adjutants, generals like Kleist, Jodl, and Heusinger, and famous theatre names like Richard Tauber (a Jew) and O. E. Hasse too.

The hostility that this situation aroused is easily conceived. The younger adjutants made life uncomfortable for him, and Morell found himself left out of their birthday greeting lists and other invitations. It is true that Morell's personal habits were unbecoming. He rarely washed, and was in that sense not very approachable. Hitler defended him: 'I don't retain Morell to sniff at,' he once said, 'but to keep me fit.' In July 1939 the doctor was among the guests at Frau Winifred Wagner's house at Bayreuth. When Hitler inquired of one daughter why she was not eating she pointed to the disturbing spectacle of the fat doctor noisily devouring a whole orange with both hands, sucking its contents through a small window that he had scooped out of its peel.

As Morell described it, the Führer's medical history was not unusual. As a child he had displayed a pulmonary apical pathology that had disappeared in later years. Morell noticed a scar on Hitler's left thigh, caused by war-

* In September 1981 this author found the long-missing diaries of Dr. Morell in the US National Archives; he published an annotated edition as *The Secret Diaries of Hitler's Doctor* (Munich, London, and New York, 1983).

time shrapnel. During the 1923 Munich putsch, the dying Scheubner-Richter had pulled Hitler down, resulting in a fracture of the left shoulder blade.

In 1938 and 1939, Hitler was unquestionably at the peak of his health. From Morell's own records, it is clear that most of his medicines were administered by hypodermic syringe. Morell was usually just giving shots of harmless dextrose, hormones, or vitamins. He also administered liberal quantities of sulphonamide drugs to treat even the common cold. Hitler certainly was impressed. 'Without Morell,' he once said, 'I would not be able to achieve half so much. I would never be able to endure the mental and physical burden.' Morell's controversial daily injections of glucose and of his own proprietary compound, Vitamultin – it consisted of ascorbic acid, calcium, and nicotinamide, with either caffeine or cocoa as a sweetener – left Hitler with a short-lived euphoria. In this way the body's normal built-in powers of resistance were replaced by injected substances – not narcotics, but just as habit-forming. In a prison camp in 1945, Brandt would rebuke Morell: 'Your behaviour has brought disgrace upon the entire medical profession!' Yet Morell's patient, Hitler, would outlive both Neville Chamberlain and Franklin D. Roosevelt.

IT IS to the actions of Chamberlain and Roosevelt in April 1939 that we now return, as – late that month – Europe took another lurch toward war. On April 23 Hitler informed Goebbels over lunch that Britain was trying to mend her fences with Nazi Germany, and that Prime Minister Chamberlain had again put out secret feelers to Berlin. For reasons of domestic politics however Chamberlain reintroduced National Service in Britain three days later. In London a strident press campaign against Hitler began. Ambassador Henderson informed the Foreign Office on April 25 in a telegram, intercepted by the Forschungsamt: 'The British press is making my life very difficult.' The next day's FA wiretaps showed that the Foreign Office told him to give Hitler advance warning of Chamberlain's conscription announcement and to reassure him that National Service was not to be construed as directed against Germany.

Hitler hitherto had felt able to ignore President Roosevelt's forays into European politics. He blamed Roosevelt's posturing on Jewish influences, and believed that isolationism was still a powerful force in the United States. In April 1939 Hitler was the recipient of an open letter from Roosevelt, appealing to him to give public assurances that he would not attack any of thirty-one specified countries. Wiretaps on the U.S. embassy in Berlin re-

vealed that staff there regarded this appeal as a gaffe. Hitler gave these assurances in a sarcastic Reichstag speech on the twenty-eighth. The Kroll Opera-house rocked with laughter as he added sardonically his own personal promise that the Reich was not planning to invade the U.S.A. either. The FA wiretaps noted that U.S. embassy staff conceded that the Führer had won 'the match.' In the same Reichstag speech he revoked the 1934 non-aggression pact with Poland and the 1935 naval agreement with Britain too. In private, he justified his stiffer attitude toward Britain by the secret documents now found in Prague archives. 'One day we'll publish them to all the world, to prove Britain's dishonesty,' Bodenschatz told a French diplomat.

Informed Germans still doubted that there would be war. Baron von Weizsäcker commented in one letter on April 29, 'Evidently we are not going to escape a degree of drama. But I don't believe that the Axis powers have any aggressive intentions, any more than that the other side will launch a deliberate preventive war. There is only one danger – and that is the unbridled Polish lesser minions, who are banging and crashing up and down the European keyboard with true Slav megalomania.'

On Goebbels's express orders, the newspaper editors continued to soft-pedal their reports on these 'incidents' in Poland. 'The Poles,' wrote Goebbels privately on May 1, 'are agitating violently against us. The Führer welcomes it. We are not to hit back for the time being, but to take note. Warsaw will end up one day the same way as Prague.' A couple of days after that diary entry, Goebbels ordered all his editors to go easy on Moscow until further notice. The German army continued its preparations for 'White.' Late in April Halder showed to Hitler a first rough timetable for invasion. The General Staff suggested that troops should be moved up to the Polish frontier under the camouflage of working on the East Wall project and conducting autumn manoeuvres. Further forces could be transferred into the East Prussian enclave, ostensibly for a big military parade to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Battle of Tannenberg – August 27, 1939.

Goebbels's radio engineers had now begun building some of the biggest propaganda transmitters in the world; he ordered editors however to keep Poland on page two of their newspapers. In the third week of May, Hitler set out on a further inspection of the army's West Wall and the Luftwaffe's flak zone from the Belgian frontier right down to Switzerland. Again hordes of Party notables and newsreel cameramen followed. The fortifications had made significant progress, and General Erwin von Witzleben, Adam's suc-

cessor as western commander, spoke loudly to this effect. Hitler's contacts with the labourers and the local Rhinelanders had a restorative effect on him.

He lunched in the village inns, while his adjutant Brückner went out and calmed the milling crowds and assured them that their Führer would shortly reappear. The women held out their children to him – a simple act that was the greatest mark of respect a leader could be shown, as Hitler remarked to his adjutants.

This was the shield that protected Hitler in 1939: he was dictator by consent; an assassin would neither be forgiven nor understood. This monolithic solidarity of Führer and Volk persisted right to the end, despite what subsequent generations have assumed.

A MONTH earlier the USSR had opened talks with Britain and France, but Stalin knew that Hitler had more to offer. On May 25 the FA wiretaps on *The Times* correspondent in Berlin, Mr. James Holburn, showed that he had learned while in London that Chamberlain did not have his heart in an alliance with Stalin – he still hoped one day to resume his direct contacts with Hitler. On May 17 the Soviet chargé in Berlin, Astakhov, had hinted that 'on present form' the talks were going against the British. Three days later Molotov himself declared to Hitler's ambassador that trade talks with Germany could be resumed just as soon as the necessary 'political basis' had been established: Ribbentrop discussed at length with Hitler how this vague remark might be interpreted. The outcome was that Weizsäcker was instructed by Hitler to put this carefully worded message to Astakhov: 'You can be our friends or our enemies. The choice is yours!'

A few days later, on May 23, Hitler delivered a four-hour speech to his Commanders in Chief in his cavernous study. He stood at a lectern and addressed altogether a dozen officers seated in three rows: Raeder, Milch, Brauchitsch, and Keitel formed the front row (Göring was away), and their chiefs of staff and adjutants the two other rows.

Hitler stated once again that Danzig was not his ultimate objective – that would be to secure Lebensraum in the east to feed Germany's eighty million inhabitants. 'If fate forces us to fight in the west,' Hitler told them, 'it will be just as well if first we possess more in the east.' This was why he had decided to 'take on Poland at the first suitable opportunity.'

His immediate purpose now, he explained, would be to isolate Poland. 'It is of crucial importance that we succeed in isolating her.'

The only surviving note is one by Colonel Schmundt, but it lists as present officers – including Göring and Warlimont – who were not there and it contains various anachronisms. Halder, questioned in mid-1945, well remembered Hitler's assurances that he would keep the western powers out of 'White': 'I would have to be a complete idiot to slither into a world war – like the nincompoops of 1914 – over the wretched Polish Corridor.'

Since Hitler had left Mussolini in the dark about 'White' the Italians were not unwilling to sign a formal alliance with him. On May 6 Ribbentrop assured the Italian foreign minister Ciano that Italy could assume there would be peace for three more years at least. Ciano came to Berlin to sign the 'Pact of Steel' on the twenty-second, and General Milch signed a separate air-force pact in Rome two days later. Milch, however, returned to Hitler with a warning that Mussolini had emphasised that Italy would not be ready for war until 1942; in a memorandum to the Führer, the Duce even talked of 1943.

Hitler also briefly courted the Reich's other southern neighbour, Yugoslavia. On June 1 the Prince Regent Paul and his English-born wife were welcomed in Berlin with a military parade. A banquet was thrown in their honour, followed by a gala performance of Wagner at the Prussian State Opera-house. Later, Hitler showed them the models of Germany's new official buildings and monuments.

To his displeasure, Paul travelled on to London afterward without having even hinted at this in Berlin; Hitler did not like being tricked, and harrumphed about it for some days afterward – Prince Paul was barely suited for a curator's job in the House of Art, he said, and had proven slippery as an eel: each time Hitler thought he could extract a firm agreement from him, the prince had claimed sanctuary behind his Parliament. His English-born wife Olga for her part had totally succumbed to Hitler's wiles. The U.S. envoy in Belgrade reported:

> Princess Olga quoted Herr Hitler as saying he could not understand why he was so misunderstood in England and that he wished that relations between Great Britain and Germany might be restored. . . . When the conversation turns to children, she said, tears come to his eyes. She described his eyes as being remarkable, clear blue and honest-looking. He told her that he had a dual personality, that his real personality is that of an artist and architect, but that fate had decreed that he should also be a politician, a military man, and the builder of a new Germany.

IN MAY 1939, a study group under General Gerd von Rundstedt had predicted that the Poles would have to design their defence campaign so as to hold the Germans long enough until Russian or western aid could come. The Wehrmacht's main strategic problem was to prevent a withdrawal of the Polish army, but it was felt that the Poles would not adopt such a strategy for political reasons. Rundstedt's final plan, dated June 15, accepted Hitler's demand for surprise attacks to open 'White.' The Polish armies west of the Vistula and Narev rivers would be destroyed by attacks from Silesia in the south and from Pomerania and East Prussia in the north; the East Prussian element, a thrust toward Warsaw, was included on Hitler's insistence against General Staff advice. Reinforcements began moving across to East Prussia by sea.

On June 7 Hitler left Berlin for the summer and settled on the Obersalzberg. Once he drove to Vienna, and on June 12 he paid a melancholy private visit to Geli Raubal's grave (her remains have since been placed in an unmarked grave). A week later a circular went to all the ministers and gauleiters with the request that 'you should refrain from any manner of visit (to the Berghof) unless a firm invitation has been issued.' One such invitation did go however to Dr. Goebbels, and another to generals von Brauchitsch and Ernst August Köstring; Köstring was the military attaché in Moscow. Goebbels gleaned the latest information from the Führer at the teahouse on June 20: 'Poland,' Hitler predicted, 'will offer resistance at first, but upon the first reverse she will pitifully collapse. The Czechs are more realistic. The Poles are quite hysterical and unpredictable. London,' added Hitler, 'will leave Warsaw in the lurch. They're just bluffing. Got too many other worries. . . . The Führer says, and he's quite right, that Britain now has the most rotten government imaginable. There's no question of their helping Warsaw. They led Prague up the garden path as well. This is provided by the files we have captured in the Czech foreign ministry.'

The two generals, Brauchitsch and Köstring, came on June 21 to discuss planning progress on 'White' and the Anglo-Soviet stalemate. After the two generals had left, Hitler relaxed with a sketching pad, deftly drawing a Party Forum that should grace Munich after his death – a parade square, Nazi Party office buildings, a bridge across Gabelsberger Strasse, and his own mausoleum, dwarfing the city's famous Frauenkirche and built to 'last until the end of time.' It was a concrete sign of his optimism about the future.

Hitler liked familiar faces. He tolerated the blue-blooded officers like Below and Puttkamer the longest. His chief adjutant, Wilhelm Brückner,

aged fifty-four, was a burly ex-machine-gunner who had marched with him in 1923. Another senior personal adjutant was ex-druggist Julius Schaub, aged forty, an undistinguished cripple whom Hitler had noticed years earlier hobbling into the Party meetings on his crutches; he had given him a job and had later grown to esteem him.

Head of Hitler's private chancellery was Albert Bormann, a quiet, open-faced man of thirty-six. His older brother Martin thought Albert had married beneath the family station, and had not spoken to him since. If Martin wanted to tell Albert something an orderly was summoned and a written note was passed. If Albert told a joke, only Martin refused to laugh. Hitler's favourite secretary was Johanna Wolf, aged thirty-nine; she had worked for him since 1930, but she was often ill. She alternated with Christa Schroeder, thirty-one, who was stolid and sharp-tongued – her feline comments on the progress of Hitler's war often made her colleagues gasp. Since 1938 the Führer had also employed a third secretary, Gerda Daranowski, aged twenty-five: she was beautiful and bright, and Hitler appreciated both qualities. All the girls stayed with him until the end, proving more steadfast than many of Hitler's ministers and generals.

The only other private staff member of consequence was Walther Hewel, a handsome Rhineland bachelor of thirty-five. He was a fellow Landsberg prisoner, like Brückner and Schaub. He had emigrated in 1926 for ten years, working first in Britain and then as a quinine, tea, and rubber planter in the Dutch East Indies. He had returned at Hitler's personal request in 1936 – voyaging back via China, Japan, Hawaii and the west and east coasts of the U.S.A., and had become Ribbentrop's liaison officer to Hitler in 1938. In that capacity he wrote private diaries, which we have been fortunate enough to obtain. For twenty years Hewel never lost faith in Hitler, and at his chief's dictate he would die as he did.

Hitler's military staff had been controlled since February 1938 by Rudolf Schmundt. Aged forty-two, a jug-eared army colonel born in Metz, which was now part of France, Schmundt had had an impeccable upbringing in a famous Potsdam regiment, and showed a pronounced sympathy toward National Socialism. He had revered Ludwig Beck until the general's vendetta against the OKW command concept made reverence no longer possible. Since June 1937 Hitler's Luftwaffe adjutant had been Captain Nicolaus von Below, aged thirty-one, a quiet Pomeranian who had undergone secret flying training at Lipetsk, USSR, and became the Richthofen squadron's adjutant

in 1935. Since March 1938 Hitler's army adjutant had been Captain Gerhard Engel, aged thirty-three; his good humour ingratiated him to lower ranks but not always to Hitler (who would send him to the front in 1943).

Fourth man in this team was the naval adjutant. In June 1938 Hitler's naval adjutant had been replaced by Lieutenant Commander Alwin-Broder Albrecht, aged thirty-five. In 1939 he had married a young schoolmistress of Kiel who was 'well-known' to the local naval garrison; when the navy's other wives raised an outcry Grand Admiral Raeder sent him on 'married leave,' then insisted on his dismissal. To Raeder's chagrin, Hitler refused. The ensuing argument at the Berghof raged for two hours. Raeder indignantly described the case as a new Blomberg affair. Hitler, however, had been caught before, and demanded proof. He sneered, 'How many of the navy wives now flaunting their virtue have had affairs of their own in the past! . . . The Blomberg case was quite different.' Admiral Raeder announced that he would resign unless Albrecht went. The Führer replied that Raeder might do as he pleased. He invited Frau Grete Albrecht to present herself on the Obersalzberg for his personal inspection. Captain Engel escorted her from the Berchtesgadener Hof hotel the next day. Hitler could not fail to notice that the tall, blonde schoolmistress had considerable female charm, and he decided that Albrecht had done well to marry her.

All this had an extraordinary consequence. Raeder still protested, and dismissed Albrecht as Hitler's naval adjutant. Hitler retaliated by making Albrecht his *personal* adjutant (the officer's records show that he left the navy on June 30, 1939, becoming an Oberführer or brigadier in the Nazi Motor Korps the next day). Raeder responded by refusing to appoint a new naval adjutant in his place. Hitler in turn retaliated by petulantly declining to attend the navy's next launching ceremony at Bremen on July 1. The navy rallied around their commander in chief: social invitations went to Albrecht, but not to his new wife Grete. (She completed the farce by returning to a previous lover, and in 1940 the unfortunate adjutant had to divorce her.) Albrecht never forgot Hitler's loyalty to him; he became a convinced National Socialist and put duty above all else, as his last moving letters from Berlin in 1945 would show. He would die with a machine gun in his hands when the Russians stormed the Reich chancellery in 1945.

Raeder refused to swallow Hitler's June 1939 'insult.' He ensconced himself for two months in the admiralty in Berlin, and refused to confer with the Führer any more. It would take the outbreak of war in September to persuade him to resume personal contact again.

Extreme Unction

ADOLF HITLER'S attitude toward the Church was ambivalent. Even though now absolute dictator he still hesitated to launch a terminal crusade against it. He had expressly forbidden newspapers to print any reference to schisms between the various religions, and transgressors were heavily punished. In April 1938 all editors had been circularised by the propaganda ministry, 'The embargo on polemics against Christianity and the Church is still in force.' When in 1939 a squabble broke out over the desire of the churches to mark the Führer's fiftieth birthday by peals of bells, Hitler ruled, 'The churches are not to be prevented from celebrating the event. But nor are they to be compelled to.'

For twenty years, he had tried to keep the Party aloof from all matters of interdenominational conflict. 'We must learn to strive for that which unites us, and discard every argument that divides,' he had said as a thirty-one-year-old speaker in 1920.

Admittedly, an element of mischievous cynicism did creep in over the years. In his speech to Party officials on November 23, 1937, he had ruled that the churches were free to portray the Lord in whatever image they wished, since neither they nor the Nazi party could be certain who was right or wrong: 'But let me make one thing quite plain. The churches may decide what happens to Germans in the Hereafter – but it is the German nation and its Führer who decide about them now. Our nation,' he thundered, 'has not been created by God to be torn asunder by the priesthood.'

Hitler's views on life after death were regularly aired in his private conversation. He believed in what he usually referred to as 'Providence,' to which he attributed the same mystic powers of explaining the inexplicable as Christians do to God. Hitler's profound loathing for the clergy can probably be traced back to the religious teacher at his school, about whom he

had a fund of distasteful anecdotes. His alert mind thrived on the anomalies of religion. His religious teachers had been unable to explain why at ten A.M. the story of the Creation should be taught from the Old Testament, and at eleven A.M. a wholly different version should be tendered by their science teacher. Admittedly, since the teachings of Charles Darwin the nuances were different, and religious teachers were now permitted to tender explanations for which – Hitler would remark with a chuckle – they would four hundred years earlier have been roasted 'to the chant of pious hymns.'

In 1939, Hitler regarded the Church as a vast and impersonal corporation surviving by unscrupulous methods and drawing colossal state subsidies. He privately pilloried its cunning amalgam of hypocrisy and big business. 'God made man,' he once said, 'and man was made to sin. God gave man the liberty to do so. For half a million years God looks on while men tear each other's eyes out, and only then does it occur to him to send his only begotten Son. Now, that's a devil of a long way around. The whole thing seems colossally ham-handed.' And, a few days later:

> How absurd it is to make Heaven seem a temptation, if the Church itself tells us that only those who haven't done so well in life are going to get in – for instance, the mentally retarded and the like. It's not going to be very nice if when we get there we find all those people who – despite the Beatitude: 'Blessed are they that are poor of spirit' – have already been a blessed nuisance when they were alive! And what kind of temptation is it supposed to be, if all we're going to find up there are the plain and mentally insipid women!

As for the Bible, 'that Jewish artefact,' Hitler regretted that it had ever been translated into German. 'Any sane German can only clutch his head in dismay at how this Jewish outpouring, this priestly babble, has persuaded his fellow Germans to cavort in a manner that we used to ridicule in the whirling dervishes of Turkey and the Negro races.' Hitler would comment in 1942, 'We merely enforce the Commandment "Thou shalt not kill" by executing the murderer. But the Church – so long as *it* held the reins of government – always put him to death by hideous tortures, by quartering him and the like.'

NOW THAT he was in power, the whole problem left Hitler no peace. Christa Schroeder wrote in a private letter on April 21, 1939:

> One evening recently the Chief was very interesting on the Church problem. . . . Christianity is founded on knowledge two thousand years old – knowledge blurred and confused by mysticism and the occult (like the Bible parables). The question is, why can't Christian ideas be updated using the knowledge of the present day? Luther strove for a Reformation but this has been misunderstood, because reformation is not a once-only affair but a process of constant renovation – not just marking time but keeping up with the developments of the age.
>
> The Chief knows full well that the Church problem is very tricky and if war breaks out it could well rebound on him domestically. My own feeling is he'd be happy if some decent way of solving it could be found.

In earlier years the only way of solving it that occurred to Hitler involved the use of dynamite. But with maturity came a recognition that he might equally let the churches 'rot away like a gangrenous arm,' until there were only simpletons standing in the pulpits and old maidens sitting in the pews before them: 'The healthier youth will be with us,' Hitler confidently predicted. Providence, he said, had given man a judgement of his own: 'That judgement teaches me that this tyranny of the lie is bound to be smashed. But it also teaches me that that can't be done yet.'

On June 29, 1941, Hewel noted yet another conversation with Hitler about religion. 'One ought not to combat religion but to let it die of its own accord.' In August of that year he assured Goebbels that he had only postponed the settling of the score; and in February 1942, referring to the 'seditious parsons,' he commented to his circle: 'I can't make my reply to these people yet. But it's all going down in my little black book.'

Hitler often talked about religion. Anneliese Schmundt would write in her diary on June 8, 1941, 'Long conversations in the evening on religion and Christianity: cultural retrogression since Greek and Roman art.' Hewel wrote a much lengthier note that evening:

> Over dinner this evening, a wonderful talk on the Roman Empire and its displacement by Christianity. . . . Christianity has been one long act of deceit and self-contradiction. It preaches goodness, humility, and love-thy-neighbour, but under this slogan it has burned and butchered millions to the accompaniment of pious proverbs. The ancients openly admitted that they killed for self-protection, in revenge, or as a punishment. The Christians do so only out of love! . . . Only Christianity has

> created a vengeful God, one who commits man to Hell the moment he starts using the brains that God gave him.
>
> The Classical was an age of enlightenment. With the onset of Christianity scientific research was halted and there began instead a research into the visions of saints, instead of the things that God gave us. Research into nature became a sin.
>
> The tragedy is that to this very day there are thousands of 'educated' people running around believing in all this claptrap – they deny that Nature is all-powerful, they glorify the weak, the sick, the crippled, and the simpleminded. In the ideal world of [Pastor Friedrich von] Bodelschwingh the healthy find everlasting life only if they have devoted their lives to the weak, to the idiot and suchlike; the sick are there so that we can do Good Deeds. If this goes on much longer, there will soon be more sick than sound. Today there are already a thousand million of them.
>
> As for cruelty, Christianity holds all world records. Christianity is the revenge of the wandering Jew. Where would we be today if only we had not had Christianity – we would have the same brains, but we would have avoided a hiatus of one-and-a-half thousand years. . . . The terrible thing is that millions of people believe, or act as though they believe, all this: they feign belief in it all. If we had all been Mohammedans, today the world would have been ours.

Excerpts from unpublished records like these show that Hitler was inspired by purely Darwinian beliefs – the survival of the fittest, with no use for the moral comfort that sound religious teaching can purvey. 'Liberty, equality, and fraternity are the grandest nonsense,' he had said that evening. 'Liberty automatically precludes Equality – because liberty leads automatically to the advancement of the healthier, the better, and the more proficient, and thus there is less equality.'

Yet Hitler still prevented the Party from taking its persecution of the Church too far. Not even he had contracted out of the Catholic church.

Once Bormann had the misfortune to order the closure of a convent in which an aunt of Eva Braun was a nun. Hitler cancelled the order, and commented to Schaub afterward that Bormann was 'a bit pigheaded.'

ON PAPEN'S advice he had normalised Nazi relations with the Vatican in July 1933 by means of a Concordat. This, the first international agreement he signed, brought the Nazi regime great prestige. Over the years however

the convents and monasteries were dissolved and expropriated. Only the Benedictines enjoyed a certain immunity at first, deriving from Hitler's private affection for the Abbot Albanus Schachleitner: they had met at a demonstration against the French occupation of the Ruhr, on Königsplatz in Munich, and Schachleitner became a supporter of the Party. His church cast him out and Schachleitner died in penury: Hitler ordered a state funeral in Munich (which ensured that the Church reburied the bones in less hallowed ground when Hitler was no longer able to intercede).

Individual Catholic leaders impressed Hitler by their diplomacy or the courage of their convictions. There was Michael, Cardinal von Faulhaber, Archbishop of Munich, whom he received privately at the Berghof to hear his manly appeal against the series of trials of clergy on homosexual charges. And there was Theodore, Cardinal Innitzer, of Vienna, whom Hitler had received on his triumphal entry in 1938: the Cardinal had swept into the foyer of Vienna's Imperial Hotel, and when Hitler dutifully kissed his ring he responded with the sign of the cross, struck above the Führer's head with a crucifix. He could not help admiring the panache of these Cardinals.

It was the Lutheran and reformed Churches in Germany that gave Hitler his biggest headaches. His early years of power were marked by futile attempts to reconcile the thirty warring Protestant factions and bring them under one overriding authority. A hostile faction had formed on one wing of the Church, the 'Confessional Church' led by Pastor Martin Niemöller.

Niemöller was a former U-boat commander, who had preached since 1931 at Dahlem in Berlin. He was 'the first Nazi priest.' His was among the first telegrams of congratulation to the Führer after Germany walked out of the League of Nations in 1933. His ambition was to become Reich Bishop, appointed by the Nazis for the Protestant Church in Germany. Throughout the summer of 1933 the various Protestant factions had bickered over a suitable Reich Bishop; none of the names they put forward – including that of Bodelschwingh – was acceptable to the ruling Party. Eventually, in September 1933, a synod at Wittenberg had elected Ludwig Müller to the position. Müller had been garrison chaplain at Königsberg and was recommended by General von Blomberg from personal acquaintance. Schwerin von Krosigk heard Niemöller propose to Bodelschwingh and others one evening that winter that their only solution was to visit Müller one dark night with a few strong-arm boys from his Dahlem congregation and 'beat up the Reich Bishop so his own mother wouldn't recognize him.'

Tired of the sniping against Müller, Hitler invited a dozen of the Protestant leaders to his chancellery on January 25, 1934. Göring had by then begun furnishing Hitler with wiretaps on Niemöller. One recorded a very recent conversation between Niemöller and a brother clergyman, discussing an audience they had just had with Hindenburg to campaign for Müller's replacement. 'We sure gave the old fellow the extreme unction this time,' Niemöller had guffawed. 'We ladled so much holy oil over him that he's going to kick that bastard [Müller] out.' Listening to the dozen bickering Protestant clergy in his chancellery study, Hitler's patience left him. He allowed them to make their demand for Müller's resignation – 'with mealy mouths and many quotations from the Scriptures,' as he described on one occasion, or 'with unctuous language' as he put it on another – and then he motioned to Göring to recite out loud from the FA wiretap transcripts. Niemöller denied that he had spoken the words concerned. According to Lammers, Hitler expressed indignation that a man of the cloth should lie. After that, there was open war between Niemöller and the Nazi regime.

In July 1935, Hitler made one last attempt to calm these troubled waters, setting up a Reich Church Ministry under Hans Kerrl. Kerrl in turn established a Reich Church Council that October, but again these efforts were frustrated by the squabbling between the German Christians and Niemöller's Confessional Church. Over the months that followed, a wave of police raids and arrests befell the latter. Niemöller himself was spared at first, but from his pulpit he launched such verbal torpedoes at Kerrl that Franz Gürtner, Minister of Justice, warned him to cease fire. Hitler was loath to make a martyr of the man, but on July 1, 1937, Niemöller was arrested for sedition.

The trial, in February 1938, was a noisy affair. Brilliantly defended by three lawyers, Niemöller used the witness box to denounce Hitler and his regime. 'In future,' Hitler groaned, years later, 'I shall allow duelling only between the gentlemen of the clergy and the legal profession!' In a snub to the regime, the court sentenced Niemöller to the seven months already served; to Hitler's pleasure, however, he refused to give the court the customary assurances of good behaviour and he was re-arrested and interned in a concentration camp. Here this turbulent priest would languish, though comfortably housed and fed, until 1945. At Munich in September 1938, Mussolini interceded for him; Hitler replied with a steely refusal: 'Within the concentration camp Niemöller has the maximum of liberty and he is well looked after,' he said. 'But never will he see the outside of it again.'

The Major Solution

OVERWHELMINGLY GERMAN in history and inclination, the port of Danzig was put under League of Nations mandate by the victors at Versailles. The Poles as protecting power had certain rights, including diplomatic, passport, and military offices. The railway system, about 120 customs officials, and a large post office building were Polish too. If Hitler did launch 'White,' Danzig would be vulnerable for several days, as General Fedor von Bock – commanding Army Group North – warned. He recommended on May 27, 1939, to the General Staff that a secret brigade should be illicitly raised from the 12,000 Germans with military experience in Danzig and from the city police; he also suggested that on the actual day of 'White' a German naval force might 'happen to' be visiting Danzig – it could disembark a battalion of troops to secure the city.

Hitler approved Bock's outline on June 11. A major general, Friedrich Georg Eberhardt, was sent in plain clothes to organise a 'Free Corps' there. Shiploads of guns and ammunition, ostensibly bound for Königsberg, suffered 'engine problems' en route and docked for repairs at Danzig – where Eberhardt's gear, everything from a shoe-nail to a 150-millimetre gun, was unloaded under cover of darkness. The SS came for a sports display in Danzig, but the SS troops stayed on afterward. By the time of 'White,' Eberhardt would command two infantry regiments, an artillery battalion, and SS irregulars too. Bridges were strengthened, barracks built, pontoon sections stockpiled.

Hitler boasted in private, 'I was owed 100 Reichsmarks; I've already collected 99 and I'm going to get the last coin too!' He authorised Goebbels to deliver a powerful and provocative speech in Danzig on June 17. Goebbels confidently briefed Nazi editors: 'This is to be a trial balloon, to test the international atmosphere on the settlement of the Danzig question.'

Berlin began to swelter. On July 3 Hitler and Göring visited a secret display of new Luftwaffe equipment at Rechlin air station. They showed Hitler an experimental Heinkel rocket-propelled fighter. A Heinkel 111 bomber, heavily overloaded, was lifted seemingly effortlessly into the air by rocket-assisted takeoff units. He saw the latest early-warning radar and pressurised cabins for high-altitude planes; in the laboratory they demonstrated to him simple methods of starting motor engines in subzero temperatures, and the new 30-millimetre cannon installed in a Messerschmitt 110 fighter in the firing-butts. It was all just a grandiose self-deception and it had fatal consequences. Hitler decided to grab a much bigger bite of Poland, apart from just Danzig and the Corridor. In May 1942, Göring would exclaim: 'The Führer took the most serious decisions on the basis of that display. It was a miracle that things worked out as well as they did, and that the consequences were not far worse.'

AS THE sun climbed higher that summer Hitler's ministers fled Berlin. Over dinner on July 4 he agreed with his propaganda minister that they should now nurture hatred towards Britain, and that the German people must learn to recognise the British as their principal obstacle. On the ninth Ribbentrop left to vacation at Lake Fuschl, near the Berghof. Brauchitsch attended Army Day celebrations at Karlshorst that day, then left for several weeks' furlough. Göring was cruising down the canals in his yacht.

Hitler could afford to wait. He knew that the Reich had most to offer Stalin in return for a pact. In mid-June 1939 the Soviets had again obliquely hinted – this time through the Bulgarian envoy in Berlin – that they would prefer dealing with the Reich, provided that Hitler would sign a non-aggression pact. He told Goebbels on July 8 that it was unlikely that London and Moscow would ever reach agreement. 'That leaves the way open for us,' concluded the propaganda minister.

Meanwhile, Hitler took direct control of every phase of the strategic preparations, dealing with Heydrich, Goebbels, and – as he lacked a naval adjutant – the admiralty in person. Albert Forster, gauleiter of Danzig, appeared several times at the Berghof. On July 13 he had what his newspaper *Danziger Vorposten* called 'a lengthy discussion' with Hitler; after another meeting a week later Forster told his own staff,

> The Führer says that . . . he was inclined just to tackle Danzig this summer. But common sense has now dictated that the settlement of this

> matter should be linked to a solution of the German-Polish problem as a whole, at a suitable time.

Forster described the solution now desired as being to regain the Reich's eastern frontiers as they had been in 1914. On July 22 Hitler telephoned the admiralty and ordered it to be ready to send the elderly cruiser *Nürnberg* to Danzig at short notice.

TWO DAYS later, on July 24, 1939, he drove to Bayreuth for his annual Wagner pilgrimage. Here he wallowed in a Wagner orgy – *The Flying Dutchman*, *Parsifal*, and the whole of the *Ring*. In his youth Hitler had been a chorister at Lambach in Upper Austria. As a romantic, rootless youth of seventeen he had scraped and saved to visit the opera at Linz, and it was seeing Wagner's early opera *Rienzi* in 1906 that had first stirred Hitler's alter ego, the demagogue slumbering within the artist.

In a way *Rienzi* was almost destined to become Hitler's own story. He recognized this in 1945, and he recited to Schaub the lines from the opera which he desired to be inscribed on his mausoleum. *Rienzi* is a true story of the Roman plebes, who are suppressed by the unscrupulous *nobili* until the young notary Rienzi (1313 – 1354) rises from their midst, an unknown citizen who rallies and liberates and leads them, until the very *nobili* themselves proclaim him their master. 'Rienzi, hail! Hail to you, the people's tribune!' Later the *nobili* conspire, even the faithful desert Rienzi, and the hand that strikes him down comes from his own ranks.

Hitler had been electrified on first hearing the Rienzi drama in 1906: he left the theatre long after midnight with his school friend, August Kubizek, and scaled a hill outside Linz. Here Hitler suddenly spoke of a pact that the people would one day make with him – to lead them out of their subjugation, to the pinnacles of freedom. He spent the night in the open air. His friend Kubizek might well have challenged him: 'Rienzi, hey! What do you plan? / I see you mightily before me – tell / Wherefore needst thou this new might?' He did not, but he met Hitler again thirty-three years later, in Bayreuth in July 1939, when they dined together at Frau Winifred Wagner's home 'Wahnfried' and here he reminded Hitler of that night on the Austrian hillside. Hitler interrupted, turned to Frau Wagner, and poured out the whole story. 'That was when it all began,' he told them.

Hitler patronised the arts as had few of his more recent predecessors. He had heard *Die Meistersinger* forty times – Schaub believed it was Hitler's

favourite because it was a pæan to German craftsmanship. 'Wahnfried' in Bayreuth was like a home away from home to Hitler: Frau Wagner, a matronly Englishwoman, widow of the great composer's son, was like a second mother to him. From 1925 to 1933 Hitler had kept away from Bayreuth to spare her any embarrassment; then he had re-established the friendship, frequently telephoning her under his private nickname of 'Bandleader Wolf.'

This remarkable dowager's admiration for Hitler would not diminish until her death. Sometimes she used their friendship to intercede on behalf of Jews or persecuted musicians. Hitler explained that she would have to write to him through Dr. Karl Brandt. 'If your letters fall into the hands of Reichsleiter Bormann,' he said, 'there's no guarantee that they'll reach me.'

WHILE HITLER stayed at Bayreuth in July 1939 the foreign clamour mounted. Ambassador Herbert von Dirksen reported from London that the British press had been crying rape ever since the annexation of Austria. What interested Hitler more was that authoritative voices could now be heard from London indicating that Chamberlain was casting around for ways of divesting himself of the awkward guarantee given to Poland.

Hitler had mentioned to Walther Hewel as recently as June – after King George VI had replied warmly to Hitler's condolences on the loss of the submarine *Thetis* – that if only he could meet some Englishman of standing with whom he could talk in German, he could soon settle their countries' remaining differences. By late July the signs were that Chamberlain and his advisers were preparing for a second Munich. On a British initiative, there had been talks between Sir Horace Wilson, one of the main appeasers among Chamberlain's advisers, and one of Göring's economics staff, Dr. Helmuth Wohlthat. Wilson had proposed a sweeping political, economic, and military agreement with Hitler, in return for certain assurances. 'Perhaps I'm too much of an optimist,' the Englishman said, 'and perhaps the solution does seem unrealistic to many observers in the present situation. But I have had the opportunity of studying the Führer and I believe that the Führer, acting as a statesman for peace, can manage even greater achievements than he has already in his construction of Grossdeutschland.'

The OKW timetable for 'White' would soon come into force: admittedly, no military decisions of significance were required until August 12, but the General Staff had determined that the optimum date for attacking Poland would be August 25, and Hitler was required to decide for or against

'White' on the fifteenth. This left barely two weeks for him to obtain Stalin's signature on a pact, and nobody believed that Ribbentrop would manage such a feat in time. 'I don't believe the Moscow talks will prove a flop,' wrote Weizsäcker in his diary on July 30. 'But nor do I believe they can be concluded in the next fourteen days, as we are now attempting. My advice is that we should resort to blunter language in Moscow about the partition of Poland; Ribbentrop suggests talking to Moscow about sharing the Baltic states so that north of the latitude of Riga should be Russia's Lebensraum and south of it ours, but I advise against this!'

Hitler stayed at Bayreuth, troubled only by the affairs of his Party henchmen. He predicted to Goebbels on July 25 that the democracies would shrink back from war, step by step; and that Warsaw too would crumble, when push came to shove. Goebbels was in a state of high nerves, but for family reasons – his wife Magda had thrown herself into a sorrowing liaison with his young and handsome state secretary at the propaganda ministry, Karl Hanke. Hitler again angrily forced a reconciliation between the couple, and required them to attend the next day's opera together; but of all operas that night's offering was the romantic tragedy *Tristan und Isolde*, and Frau Goebbels openly blubbered while Hitler and his white-faced propaganda minister affected not to notice.

Robert Ley, the Labour Front leader, tormented Hitler in a different way. In Winifred Wagner's exquisite drawing room he proposed that at the coming Nuremberg Rally they should dispense with the customary fanfare from Verdi's *Aïda* and play instead a little piece which he, Ley, had composed for the occasion. He modestly played a gramophone record of the fanfare. After the last fearsome strains died away, Hitler tersely announced: 'We'll stick to *Aïda!*'

IT WAS here at Bayreuth that Hitler jovially buttonholed Neurath with the words 'You're going to be astonished by what I am going to tell you: what do you say we come to an agreement with Russia?' Neurath was indeed stunned, but responded favourably. Hitler ventured, 'It will probably be hard to reconcile my Party stalwarts to the move.' Neurath flattered him: 'The Party is like putty in your hands, mein Führer.'

Hitler still feared a snub from the Soviet dictator however, and time was running out. Acting on his instructions, on August 2 Ribbentrop hinted to the Soviet chargé d'affaires that Moscow and Berlin ought to decide Poland's fate between them – and he added the tempting bait that there was

'no problem between the Baltic and the Black Sea' that could not be solved between them. Ribbentrop emphasised that Germany was in no hurry yet – a poker-faced assurance that must have been torture to utter, given the rigid timetable already imposed by the OKW's planning. The clock was already ticking, but Moscow must not hear it.

Hitler left Bayreuth on August 3, toured the Nuremberg arena – as though nothing would prevent the Party rally from opening here in one month's time – and drove down the autobahn to Munich on the fourth. At his Munich apartment he changed into a dark-blue suit and received General Keitel in the drawing room. The OKW chief had brought with him the final timetable for 'White.' The army still wanted X-day to be on August 25, as mid-September rains might bog down panzer operations in Poland and set the German air force at a disadvantage.

Hitler motioned Keitel and his staff officer Major Bernd von Lossberg into easy chairs, and explained to them once more, in an affable Austrian dialect which rather surprised Lossberg, just why the Polish problem had to be settled now. He blamed Chamberlain's thoughtless guarantee to Poland for stiffening Warsaw's opposition. 'The gentlemen in London and Paris won't undertake anything against us this time either,' he assured the officers. Then his Austrian dialect vanished, submerged in a sudden cresting wave of familiar guttural Hitler-German: 'I will see to that. This Polish conflict will never, never, never result in a European war.'

He drove on that evening to the Berghof, and this was to be the scene of the next three weeks' momentous events.

FROM LONDON the signs were again conciliatory. Neville Chamberlain had adjourned Parliament on August 4 for two months. Simultaneously, he risked a strange move that further convinced Hitler that Britain was not yet ready to fight: Sir Horace Wilson invited Ambassador Herbert von Dirksen to call at his private flat in Chelsea – specifying that he should come on foot so as not to attract attention – and outlined an offer for a 'full-bodied political world partnership' between Britain and Germany. If Hitler would accept the terms, Wilson indicated, then Britain would put pressure on Poland to agree to Germany's demands. Thus the awkward British guarantee to Poland would become inoperative. Ribbentrop received Dirksen's astounding telegram on this talk soon after. Weizsäcker noted on the sixth, 'Underground feelers from Chamberlain toward a compromise (via Horace Wilson) prove that a dialogue with Britain could be got going if we so desired.'

Hitler was not inclined to bend, however. Secret directives went to the Nazi press on the twelfth and thirteenth, forbidding them even to mention Britain's apparent change of heart. 'Britain incited the Poles, now she must pay the price,' was the official line to be taken. Editors were commanded to observe 'absolute discipline' on this posture.

Britain's talks with Stalin must have reached a deadlock, of this Hitler was convinced. He detailed a Nazi agent to stand by at Croydon airfield, London, as the British chief negotiator, William Strang, flew back from Moscow on August 7. Strang's dejected look betrayed that Hitler's surmise was probably correct.

On the ninth, Halifax himself spoke to Dirksen. This time he promised that Britain was willing to go 'a long way' toward meeting Germany's desires. But Hitler's central desire now was to have what he called his little war with Poland. After his Intelligence chief Canaris conferred on August 10 with Keitel and Schmundt at Salzburg, and then with Ribbentrop at Fuschl, Lieutenant Colonel Erwin Lahousen wrote in his diary: 'Intimations of a Non-Aggression Pact with R.,' meaning Russia.

ON AUGUST 11, Hitler ordered the anti-Polish propaganda volume turned up to 'eighty percent' of its full volume. After months of maintaining a studied silence in the Nazi press about the Polish 'atrocities,' on the sixteenth editors were secretly circularised: 'The time has come for the German press to abandon its reserve.' Goebbels ordered Polish 'terrorist incidents' moved from page two to page one – though still only modestly displayed, and there was to be no mention yet of Germany's territorial claims.

Hitler needed reliable staged 'incidents' at a closely defined place, time, and date – he had a tight OKW schedule to meet. Two diabolical schemes had been drafted by SS Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich, 'following long-standing patterns set by our western neighbours,' as he explained to SS commanders on about the eleventh. In one, his agents would masquerade as Polish insurgents, seize the German transmitter station at Gleiwitz, broadcast a proclamation, and then escape. In the other, more complex, incident a company of Polish-speaking idealists would be recruited from the Upper Silesian work-force, dressed in Polish uniforms on the eve of 'White,' and ordered to 'seize' a German customs post near Hochlinden; a mock battle would be staged with SS troops, while real Polish troops would be lured into the fray from their garrison at nearby Rybnik by a Polish officer who had recently defected to Germany. The Gestapo chief, Heinrich

Müller, also hit on the macabre idea of strewing fresh corpses – condemned convicts from Dachau – on the 'battlefield,' equipped with genuine Polish soldiers' passbooks.

When Hitler talked with Professor Carl Burckhardt, the League of Nations high commissioner in Danzig, on the eleventh he had prepared the way by underlining the point: 'If there's the slightest provocation I shall shatter Poland without warning into so many pieces that there will be nothing left to pick up.' He boasted that whereas in 1938 he had had to whip his generals on, this year he was having to hold them back. Hitler continued (recalled Burckhardt years later): 'Everything I'm doing is directed against Russia. If the West is too obtuse to grasp this, then I'll be forced to come to terms with the Russians and turn against the West first, after which I'll direct my entire strength against the USSR.' The next day, Hitler made much the same point to Count Galeazzo Ciano, Mussolini's foreign minister – that he proposed one day to tread the old Teutonic road toward the east, as he had told the Duce himself aboard the *Conte Cavour* in May 1938.

THE ITALIANS were still unaware of 'White,' the plan to invade Poland.

> For the first time [wrote Weizsäcker in his diary] we're finding the Italian alliance a nuisance. Because over the last week our [i.e., Hitler's] will to war has become much stronger. Himmler, Ribbentrop, and Gauleiter Forster have each been promoting the idea of war in their own spheres. Ribbentrop is guaranteeing that the British and French will remain neutral provided we can deal annihilating blows to Poland in the first three days. This he thinks is certain.

Count Ciano was received at the Berghof on August 12. Eva Braun, confined upstairs, later pasted a sequence of snapshots into her album showing the swirl and flourish of arriving limousines, black-shirted Fascist leaders greeting Hitler, and some of them even glancing up to her window (she girlishly captioned the photos: 'Up there, there's something forbidden to behold – me!').

Hitler had little time or liking for Ciano; he told Schaub that the Italian was 'too brilliantined and dandified' to inspire trust. Hitler spoke about Germany's strength and Britain's overwhelming vulnerability to air attack. (This was all probably meant for English ears. He would say at a conference on May 20, 1943, 'Every memorandum I wrote to the Duce reached Brit-

ain immediately after: so I only wrote him what I wanted the British to know without fail.') It seems clear that Hitler 'confidentially' informed Ciano that 'White' would start in two weeks' time, because the British foreign office learned of this a few days later. Ciano was astounded. Hitler assured Ciano that the West would not intervene, but he did not explain why: the Nazi-Soviet pact.

Even as Ciano was uncomfortably remonstrating with Hitler in the Great Hall, a door was flung open and Walther Hewel hurried in. He whispered to Ribbentrop; Ribbentrop took Hitler aside and whispered to him: Molotov had just agreed in principle to receive a German negotiator in Moscow. Hitler's mood changed. With a broad grin he invited the Fascist guests to accompany him up to his teahouse eyrie, the Eagle's Nest.

Curiously, Baron von Weizsäcker also appears to have been left in the dark at first about the news from Moscow. The likely reason was that Weizsäcker was communing treacherously closely with the ambassadors of Britain, France, and Italy. On the thirteenth he wrote, 'My own formula remains unchanged: if Poland commits a provocation of such effrontery that Paris and London will also recognize it as such, then we can set about her. Otherwise we should keep our hands off. . . . I am still not quite clear,' continued Weizsäcker in some puzzlement on the fourteenth, 'just what has brought about this somersault at Fuschl [Ribbentrop's summer home] and the Berghof. A week ago they still inclined to the view that the western powers would not drop Poland, so we could not tackle her.'

Hitler hesitated for several days before responding to Moscow. But the OKW timetable had him in its vice; important decisions were due on the fifteenth. The latest Intelligence reports showed that Britain had offered Poland an eight-million-pound loan, and that Polish mobilisation preparations were far in advance of his own.

On August 14 Hitler called his three commanders in chief to the Berghof and explained why 'White' was still on, and why he was sure that the western powers would not declare war. General Sir Edmund Ironside had submitted a scathing report on Polish combat readiness – Hitler guessed that Chamberlain would use it as an alibi to ditch the Poles. Were Britain really in earnest, she would have offered Poland more than a measly eight-million-pound loan ('The British don't sink money in an unsound business') and the Poles in turn would be more insolent than FA intercepts of late revealed. Hitler said that his only worry was that the British might yet cheat him of 'White' by making some last-minute offer; he told Göring,

Brauchitsch, and Raeder on this day that he had hinted to the British that he would approach them again with an offer of his own later – *after* he had dealt with Poland. Raeder – still in a huff over the Albrecht affair – did not speak, nor did Brauchitsch: Canaris wrote in his diary, 'Commander in Chief army didn't get a word in edgeways.'

Hitler now took a further fateful step. At 10:53 p.m. that evening, August 14, Ribbentrop cabled these dramatic instructions to the embassy in Moscow: Molotov was to be informed that he, Ribbentrop, was willing to come to Moscow in person. His State Secretary Weizsäcker correctly reflected, 'If Ribbentrop manages to conclude a pact . . . they [the Russians] will thereby be inviting us to attack Poland.'

On the fifteenth Hitler authorised all the timetable steps consistent with an attack on Poland on the twenty-fifth. The armed forces were ordered to assume that '"White" will be on.' The navy ordered the pocket battleships *Graf Spee* and *Deutschland* and fourteen submarines to stand by for operations into the Atlantic. The Nuremberg Rally was secretly cancelled, to release railroad capacity for the Wehrmacht; but foreign diplomats were still fed with the impression that the rally was on.

Less well documented are the murkier operations planned by the Abwehr and SS. They had prepared commando-style operations to secure vital bridges, tunnels, and industrial plants behind the Polish lines on the very eve of 'White.' The Abwehr had trained a task force to seize the 300-yard-long railroad tunnel at Jablunka, on the main line from Vienna to Warsaw. If the Poles could detonate the demolition charges in the twin tunnel it would bar the entry into southern Poland of Wilhelm List's Fourteenth Army, now massing in Slovakia. Hitler piously insisted on a clear distinction between these 'illegals' and regular German army units: when Manstein asked permission to operate three assault groups in Polish uniforms during Army Group South's attack, Hitler turned him down; Himmler then asked permission for the SS to use Polish uniforms in precisely the same area, and on August 17 Hitler gave him his blessing and ordered the Abwehr to release 150 Polish uniforms from its stocks to Heydrich for the purpose.

At the northern end of the Polish front Hitler personally conceived an adventurous operation to secure the two strategic bridges across the river Vistula at Dirschau. Each bridge had its eastern end on Danzig soil and its western end footed on Polish ground, Pomerania. Obsessed with the Dirschau bridges, Hitler studied air photographs and models, and devised plan after plan. Eventually he agreed with Göring, Himmler, and Brauchitsch

on a heavy dive-bomber attack on the Polish bridge garrison, the local power station, and the demolition fuses themselves, followed up immediately by a ground assault: a goods train would arrive from East Prussia in the last minutes before 'White' began, laden with concealed sappers and storm troops under Lieutenant Colonel Gerhardt Medem. Hitler briefed him personally. Timing was crucial, since the attack had to coincide exactly with the Luftwaffe strike against the Polish naval base at Gdynia – the first overt act of 'White.'

The elderly warship *Schleswig-Holstein* was moved to Danzig. When 'White' began, she would immediately bombard the Polish stronghold emplaced (illegally) on the Westerplatte – the sliver of land commanding the entrance to the harbour.

Inevitably, the Russians began to dither. After Molotov formally proposed – on August 16 – a non-aggression pact, Ribbentrop promptly replied with the suggestion that he visit Moscow in two or three days' time to sign it. The Russians dragged their feet. On August 18 Ribbentrop telegraphed his ambassador urging speed, and mentioned alluringly that he would be authorised to sign a secret additional protocol codifying aspects too delicate for public consumption.

Even so, Molotov seemed unwilling to receive him in Moscow before August 26 or 27.

As Ribbentrop well knew, the OKW timetable was geared to launching 'White' on or soon after the twenty-fifth. The political effect of the pact would be nil if it were not signed well before then. In fact the A-movement, the initial transfer of 220 train-loads to assemble military equipment and troops in the east, was already beginning.

TO HITLER it seemed a proper occasion for taking a personal risk. 'Our opponents still hoped,' he bragged two days later, 'that Russia would emerge as our enemy after we had defeated Poland. But our opponents had not taken my power of decision into account. Our opponents are little worms – I saw them all at Munich!' On August 20 he took the unprecedented and flattering step of writing a personal note to Stalin, asking him to accept Ribbentrop's presence in Moscow not later than three days from now.

Frightened by his own boldness, Hitler could not contain his nervousness after that. He telephoned Göring in the small hours; he snarled uneasily at Ribbentrop for having tempted him out onto this trembling limb of high diplomacy. But during the afternoon of August 21 word came from

Moscow: his ambassador had been summoned to see Molotov at three P.M. More anguished hours passed.

At last Ribbentrop brought the ambassador's report. A smile lit up Hitler's face. A photographer was summoned to capture the moment as he read the telegram: the Kremlin would be happy to receive Herr Ribbentrop in two days' time, as Hitler had requested.

An air of celebration gripped the Berghof, as though a great victory had been won. And in a sense it had, for when German radio interrupted its programmes at 11:15 P.M. to broadcast this chilling news to the world, nobody could doubt that it spelled the end for Poland.

'Now,' Hitler said triumphantly to his commanders the next morning, 'now I have Poland just where I want her!'



The Reichsführer SS, Heinrich Himmler, inspects prisoners at Dachau concentration camp, April 25, 1939 (AUTHOR'S COLLECTION)

Pact with the Devil

To his adjutants Hitler truculently claimed that he wanted only to be allowed his 'First Silesian War' and nothing more. He would explain to his commanders that from now on the German public would just have to get used to fighting. The Polish campaign would be a good introduction. On August 18 he had word telephoned to Dr. Goebbels in Berlin to turn up the propaganda volume to full blast by Tuesday the twenty-second. With Poland totally isolated by the Nazi-Soviet Pact, Hitler was jubilant. He phoned Goebbels on the twenty-second, and the minister congratulated him on his masterstroke.

He still had no clear idea of the sequence of events after 'White' – no doubt the Goddess of Fortune would see to that. All that was constant was his long-term goal – the goal that he had set out in *Mein Kampf* in 1924, in secret to his Commanders in Chief on February 2, 1933, again on November 5, 1937, May 28, 1938, and more recently in his secret speeches of January and February 1939. 'White' was just one more step toward Germany's 300-year-old dream of a Reich ruling Central and Eastern Europe, and thereby dominating the world.

What means were not justified to that end? Britain, he would cajole and win with blandishments: he would offer his Wehrmacht to defend her far-flung Empire against the Asiatic hordes and other predators. Germany's other neighbours, Hitler would cheat, threaten, bribe, or deceive. 'As a private person I would never break my word,' he would confide to Hewel in June 1941. 'But if it is necessary for Germany – then a thousand times!'

Without waiting for Stalin's reply he had already ordained on the nineteenth that all his senior commanders were to meet him three days later at

the Berghof. The invitation issued by the OKW emphasised: 'He particularly wants the conference to remain absolutely secret and no word whatsoever to leak to the foreign press.' It would be disguised as a harmless tea party, with half the guests fetched by Hitler's motor pool from Salzburg and half from Munich. All were to come in plain clothes.

When he appeared in the Great Hall at noon on August 22 Hitler found about fifty officers arrayed in four or five rows of chairs – army-group and army commanders, their chiefs of staff and their navy and air force equivalents. Prominently to the fore was Field Marshal Hermann Göring, who had interpreted the words 'plain clothes' less literally than the others. He was wearing a sleeveless green leather jerkin with thick yellow buttons over a white silk blouse, while his ample lower extremities were sheathed in grey knickerbockers and long grey stockings. A gold dagger dangled nonchalantly from an exotic sword belt.

Hitler spread out his outline notes on the grand piano, and launched into his first speech. His argument was simple but persuasive: the Wehrmacht was about to embark on 'White,' a campaign they could not lose. There was no time like the present. Neither he nor Mussolini would live for ever: 'At any moment I might be struck down by a criminal or lunatic!' He had no fears of any second front. Britain and France might posture menacingly, but they would not really fight. Hitler then described how he had set the ball rolling toward rapprochement with Stalin by his 'particularly cordial' welcome for the Soviet ambassador at the New Year's reception. 'That same evening,' he said, 'the ambassador expressed his thanks to me for this and for not having given him second-class treatment at the reception.' With a gesture toward Ribbentrop he announced triumphantly that the foreign minister was flying to Moscow immediately to sign the pact. 'Now I have Poland just where I want her!' Now Germany could not be blockaded, because the USSR would supply all the cereals, cattle, coal, wood, lead, and zinc that Germany needed. 'I am only afraid that at the last moment some *Schweinehund* might put to me a plan for mediation!'

A buffet lunch was served on the terraces. Afterward Hitler spoke for another hour as a storm gathered outside the big picture window. He adjured the commanders to display an iron nerve, even if Britain and France prepared for war. 'Each and every one of you must act as though we have, all along, been spoiling for a fight with the western powers as well.' It was vital to crush every living spark out of Poland rapidly and, if needed, brutally. 'I shall provide a propaganda motive for launching this war, whether

plausible or not: the victor is not challenged afterward as to whether he has told the truth.' Hitler concluded with the appeal, 'I have done my duty. Now go out and do yours!'

Göring rose, importantly mounted three shallow steps, and assured the Führer that the Wehrmacht would do its duty. Brauchitsch confidently dismissed his generals with these words: 'Gentlemen: to your stations!' The Luftwaffe generals Milch and Kesselring were seen in a broad good humour. Only Grand Admiral Raeder came briefly to remind Hitler of the vulnerability of a sea-cadet ship permanently berthed in the Gulf of Danzig. The Führer was overheard to reply: 'What if the old tub does go down!' The Grand Admiral coldly reminded him that there were several hundred sea cadets on board. It was the only time he saw the Führer in these last remaining days of peace.

Ribbentrop set out that afternoon for Moscow, armed with Hitler's private instructions to yield to every Soviet demand: if necessary to secure Molotov's signature, Ribbentrop was to deny any German interest in southeastern Europe, 'right down to Constantinople and the Dardanelles Straits.' That evening, August 22, he repeated that his only real fear was that some imbecile might oblige him, by 'subtle proposals,' to give way again. This was no idle fear: since about August 16 the FA had been monitoring furtive phone conversations between the British ambassador in Berlin and Sir Horace Wilson in London. Wilson was searching desperately for a formula that would give Danzig back to the Reich. On August 20 he had secretly told the German press attaché in London that he was willing to 'come secretly to Germany' if need be.

Late on August 22, the British ambassador phoned, asking to see the Führer the next day. He had a personal letter from the British prime minister to Hitler: 'It defines our position exactly,' the FA wiretap quoted Henderson as saying. 'How we are bound by our obligations to the Poles and how we shall live up to these obligations should Poland be attacked.' According to the wiretap, the Chamberlain letter would propose a cooling-off period while the questions of Danzig and the German minority in Poland were settled.

By the time Henderson reached the Berghof with this letter at noon on the twenty-third, Hitler had already drafted a reply. Weizsäcker wrote in his diary, 'The Führer's purpose is to bully the British government into dropping its guarantee obligations to Poland.' When Henderson tried to explain that Britain was bound to honour her obligations, Hitler coarsely

replied: 'Then honour them! If you hand out blank cheques you must expect to have to pay out on them.' He asked Henderson to come back later that afternoon to collect his reply to Chamberlain.

BEFORE RETURNING, at three P.M. Henderson telephoned his Berlin embassy from Salzburg. 'I hope to be back in Berlin about eight P.M.,' the FA wiretappers heard him report.

> He [Hitler] is entirely uncompromising and unsatisfactory but I can't say anything further until I've received his written reply. Roughly, the points made by him were: Poland has been warned that any further action against German nationals and any move against Danzig, including economic strangulation, will be met by immediate German action. If Britain takes further mobilisation measures, general mobilisation will take place in Germany. . . I asked whether this was a threat. His reply was, 'No, a measure of protection.'

Hitler's written answer was intransigent. In their second conversation, that afternoon, Henderson argued that it was proof of Chamberlain's good intentions that he was still refusing to take Churchill into his Cabinet; the anti-German faction in Britain mainly consisted of Jews and anti-Nazis, he said. After he left the Berghof, Weizsäcker caught Hitler briefly alone and warned that Italy was only lukewarm about war, while the British were the captives of their own foreign policy. 'Britain and France are bound to declare war. They aren't people you can deal with logically or systematically – they're labouring under a psychosis, a kind of whisky intoxication. . . Tomorrow Chamberlain will rally the whole Parliament behind him the moment he talks of war.' Hitler disagreed, though evidently without conviction because Weizsäcker noted that day: 'He still thinks he can localise the war, but he's also talking – today at any rate – of being able to fight a general war as well. Until recently, his view on this was very different.'

ALONE OR in the company of his adjutants, Hitler paced the Berghof terraces. Goebbels flew down from Berlin. 'The Führer,' he recorded 'greets me very cordially. He wants me to be with him over the next few days. In the afternoon he gives me a broad overview of the situation: Poland's plight is desperate. We shall attack her at the first possible opportunity. The Polish state must be smashed just like the Czech. It won't take much effort. More

difficult is the question whether the West will intervene. At present one can't say. It depends. London is talking tougher than in September 1938. So we're going to have to box cunning. At present Britain probably doesn't want war. But she can't lose face. . . Italy isn't keen but she'll probably go along with us. She's hardly got any choice.'

Late that evening Ribbentrop came faintly on the telephone from Moscow: Stalin was demanding that the tiny but ice-free ports of Libau and Windau in Latvia should be assigned to his sphere of interest. Hitler sent an orderly for an atlas, and replied that the USSR was welcome to the ports concerned. Later still, at dinner, a paper was handed to him. Hitler excitedly rapped the table for silence and announced that the pact with Stalin had been signed.

After dinner, the whole party strolled out onto the darkened terraces. Across the valley the night sky was lightened by a phenomenon not normally seen in these southern latitudes – an aurora borealis, of bloody red.

He sat up with Goebbels and several others until four A.M. talking things over. He had now decided that 'White' should begin at 4:30 A.M. on the twenty-sixth. The second phase, the Y-movement, had just begun (at eight P.M.): 1,300 trainloads of matériel and troops were moving eastward, and 1,700 toward the west. Raeder's warships were already at sea. Across the Atlantic a German supply ship, the *Altmark*, was just weighing anchor to rendezvous with the German raider *Graf Spee*. What could still go wrong? Weizsäcker wrote in his diary that evening, August 24: 'Italy is acting as though the whole affair does not concern her. . . The thought that [Hitler] may have to fight the West as well is causing him more concern than I suspected.'

At 3:30 P.M. Hitler and Goebbels had flown back to Berlin, to meet Ribbentrop, who would arrive back at Tempelhof airport from Moscow at 6:45. In Berlin sobering news awaited him: Chamberlain had just publicly reaffirmed in the reconvened House of Commons that Britain planned to stand by her guarantee to Poland, despite the Moscow pact. Hitler analysed the position with Ribbentrop, Göring, and Weizsäcker. Ribbentrop was full of his impressions of the Kremlin. Stalin, he said, had toasted each member of the German delegation in turn. 'Stalin is just like you, mein Führer,' Ribbentrop gushed. 'He's extraordinarily mild – not like a dictator at all.'

More cursorily they discussed Italy. Hitler still ignored every sign that his Axis partner was ill-disposed toward war. The only risk that Hitler would admit was that the Italians might bluster that events had taken an 'unex-

pected turn.' So, after midnight, he had Ribbentrop telephone Count Ciano to advise him that 'White' was now imminent. To Ribbentrop and Hitler it seemed a pure formality: they assured Ciano that the Moscow pact would rule out any western intervention.

WHEN HITLER rose the next morning, August 25, 1939, his official residence was already crowded. 'White' was now less than twenty-four hours away. The brown Nazi Party uniform was everywhere. Everyone knew that at two P.M. Hitler was due to give the code word, and none of his followers wanted to miss the historic moment. The photographs show Bormann, Goebbels, Ribbentrop, and Himmler all hanging around. Telephone wires snaked across the priceless carpets in tangled profusion. Ribbentrop dictated by telephone a formal letter from the Führer to Mussolini hinting that war might come at any hour; Hitler asked for an early response. By noon there was still no reply, so he inquired of the OKW how long he could postpone the attack decision: the General Staff agreed to a one-hour extension, until three. Hitler invited Ambassador Henderson to come over at 1:30. (Weizsäcker observed in his diary, 'Most of the day in the Reich chancellery. Efforts are still being made to split the British from the Poles.')

At 12:30 P.M. Lieutenant Colonel Nikolaus von Vormann reported to Hitler as liaison officer. Colonel Erwin Rommel reported as commandant of the Führer HQ: Hitler sent him on ahead with the HQ unit to Bad Polzin – a railroad station in Pomerania, where Bock's Army Group North had established its HQ. Captain von Puttkamer also arrived back at the chancellery. The admiralty had apprehensively recalled him from the destroyer force to act as naval adjutant. Hitler took him aside to talk about his destroyer experiences until 1:15 when Bormann announced that lunch was served.

Barely had Hitler settled with his nine-man staff at the round lunch table when a roll of drums from the courtyard heralded the arrival of Sir Nevile Henderson. For over an hour, speaking with apparent sincerity, Hitler put to the ambassador the folly of Britain's throwing away her Empire for Poland's sake. He followed with his now-familiar offer: *after* he had settled the Polish problem, he was willing to conclude agreements with Britain which 'would . . . if necessary assure the British Empire of German assistance, regardless of where such assistance should be necessary.' He offered partial disarmament and even hinted that if Britain waged a 'sham war' to preserve face he would not begrudge it. Once the war was over he would return to his beloved architecture. 'I'm not really a politician at all,' he said.

The FA intercepts show that Henderson was not taken in. He reported in cypher to London that it was plain to him that Hitler was trying to drive a wedge between Britain and Poland.

THERE WAS still no formal reply from Mussolini, but the FA had now intercepted Count Ciano's instructions to the Italian ambassador to see Ribbentrop at once and inform him of the Duce's statement in the event of war: 'If Germany attacks Poland and the conflict remains localised, Italy will afford Germany any kind of political and economic aid requested of her.' To Hitler, this seemed satisfactory. When Attolico thereupon asked urgently for an audience, he was asked to come at two P.M. Attolico had to wait while Hitler talked with Henderson – and even as he waited he was urgently informed by Rome that his instructions had been *cancelled.* Hitler sent Ribbentrop out impatiently to telephone Ciano. The word from Rome was that Ciano and Mussolini had both left for the beach.

It was now 2:45 P.M. There were only fifteen minutes to go to the General Staff's deadline. Hitler crossed to the music room with Ribbentrop and closed the door behind them. After fifteen minutes, Hitler decided he could not wait for the Duce's reply any longer. At 3:02 P.M., pale but otherwise composed, he opened the door and announced to the throng: 'Case White!'

So the attack would begin next morning. Hitler's special train, *Amerika*, was shunted into Anhalt station to await him. Telegrams went out to every Reichstag deputy ordering an emergency session at five the next morning. The public telephones to London and Paris were cut off. From Brauchitsch's headquarters the 3:02 P.M. code word was cabled, teletyped, telephoned, and duplicated; camouflage was stripped, engines tested, ammunition cases broken open – for at 8:30 that evening the advance toward the Polish frontier would begin.

ONE, TWO hours passed. Suddenly one of the many telephones rang: a voice said that the British government was going to ratify its pact with Poland that evening – the news had come from the press office. Ribbentrop urged Hitler to halt the attack, but Hitler was no dilettante. He knew that an army is an amorphous and fluid animal, with many brains and many claws. He summoned Colonel Schmundt; Schmundt called for General Keitel; Keitel sent for General von Brauchitsch – but he was nowhere to be found. Schmundt fetched the OKW timetable, the long pages were unfurled and calculations made. It seemed there was still time.

Even as they were talking, at about six P.M. the Italian ambassador hurried in. He brought a further bombshell – the reply from Rome. Mussolini attached such fearful conditions to any Italian aid – for instance, 'immediate war material and raw material deliveries from Germany' – and it was couched in such language ('I consider it my absolute duty as a loyal friend to tell you the whole truth . . .') that Hitler could only treat it as a stinging rebuff. To Colonel von Vormann he hissed, 'Cunning! That's what we've got to be now. As cunning as foxes!' He was stunned. Goebbels saw him brooding and thinking things over – 'It's a hard blow for him. But he'll find a way out, even from this devilish situation. He's always found one before, and he'll do so this time too.'

Hitler ordered the army colonel to summon his chiefs, Brauchitsch and Halder, Chief of General Staff, to the building. But Halder was on the road somewhere with his entire operational staff, transferring from the war department in Bendler Strasse to General Staff HQ at Zossen, outside Berlin. Brauchitsch arrived at Hitler's residence at seven P.M. Sober and unexcitable, he agreed that 'White' could be postponed. In fact he welcomed the delay, as it would shift the emphasis to a properly planned mobilisation. He now told Hitler, 'Give me a week to complete mobilisation as planned, and you'll have over a hundred divisions available. Besides, this way you gain time for your political manoeuvring.' He promised: 'I can halt the army before it hits the frontier at 4:30 A.M.'

At 7:45 P.M. Vormann was dispatched by car to rush the written Halt order personally to Halder. When Hitler telephoned Göring, the field marshal asked him how long he intended to postpone 'White.' Hitler replied, very significantly, 'I'll have to see whether we can eliminate this British intervention.' Göring was sceptical: 'Do you really think four or five days will change things much?'

HITLER APPEARED downstairs looking more relaxed on August 26. The news was that the army had managed to halt its attack on Poland virtually in mid-leap. The Halt order had reached all but one army patrol: it had attacked Poland by itself and suffered accordingly. A small task force of Abwehr agents under Lieutenant Herzner, sent into Poland ahead of zero hour to hold open the Jablunka railroad tunnels, could not be recalled. A pathetic message came that they were now being encircled by regular Polish troops. Hitler ordered the little band of desperadoes to hold out as long as possible. To the Polish authorities, meanwhile, the Germans coolly disowned

Herzner's force as an irresponsible Slovakian gang. Heydrich's planned provocations in Upper Silesia were called off at the last moment: the 'Polish corpses' supplied by Dachau were given a reprieve.

A telegram had arrived during the night from the German ambassador in Rome. It described vividly Mussolini's response at 3:20 P.M. the previous day, on reading Hitler's first letter: the Duce had 'emphatically stressed' that he would stand unconditionally at Hitler's side. That tallied with the first version of his reply as intercepted by the FA.

Italy's attitude had however dramatically changed. At 11:52 A.M., the Forschungsamt intercepted Count Ciano's telephone call from Rome to Attolico in Berlin, dictating what he described as Mussolini's demands from Germany: 150 flak batteries, millions of tons of coal, steel, and oil and impossible quantities of molybdenum (600 tons!), tungsten, zirconium, and titanium. At noon Keitel, Brauchitsch, and Göring came.

Keitel confirmed that the OKW saw no prospect whatever of meeting the Italian demands.

At about 1:30 P.M. Attolico brought the list. New was Attolico's demand that all the material must reach Italy 'before the beginning of hostilities.' Attolico complacently assured Hitler that all the figures were correct. At 2:30 P.M. Hewel phoned Ambassador von Mackensen in Rome to 'verify' the figures with Ciano; Ciano also insisted that there was no possibility of error. Mackensen was then instructed to see Mussolini and show him the figures – an instruction he found 'puzzling,' since the figures were supposed to have emanated from the Duce in the first place.

Controlling his anger, Hitler began drafting yet another letter to Mussolini. He said he would do what he could to meet the demands. Where the Italians had asked only for flak batteries, Hitler proposed in his early draft to promise them flak battalions (*Abteilungen*). Göring was shocked and objected that that was quite out of the question. Hitler cynically replied, 'I'm not concerned with actually making the deliveries but with depriving Italy of any excuse to wriggle out of her obligations.'

Shortly before lunch General Milch arrived from Carinhall. It was he who candidly suggested that Italy's benevolent neutrality would be far better during 'White.' Hitler slapped his thigh and brightened. The letter that was finally telephoned to Rome at three P.M. reflected this change of emphasis: Hitler asked only that Italy should make sufficient military clatter to contain some of the West's forces. Who needed Italian military assistance anyway?

Mussolini confirmed that evening that since Germany could not supply the materials he had requested, Italy herself could not actively participate. Hitler replied with two lame requests: he asked his friend not to give the world any clue to Italy's disappointing attitude; and he asked for Italian industrial and agricultural workers for the Reich. Mussolini readily agreed.

That day the FA intercepted a report by the Italian embassy in Berlin. Canaris had gleefully described to his crony, the military attaché, how Hitler had revoked 'White' on the previous evening. Hitler angrily sent for his devious Intelligence chief and reprimanded him for his inexplicable talkativeness.

France's faintheartedness was apparent in a letter from the prime minister, Edouard Daladier, which the ambassador brought to Hitler at seven p.m. that evening, August 26: 'You were like me a soldier in the front lines in the last war. You will know as I do what contempt and condemnation the devastations of war aroused in the consciences of nations, regardless of how the war ended. . .' Coulondre followed the letter with an emotional speech, begging the Führer who had built a whole empire without bloodshed to hesitate before shedding the blood of women and children now. Hitler remained silent, and kicked himself later for not having advised Coulondre that, since he would never start the bombing of civilians, he would not be to blame if the blood of 'women and children' flowed. Coulondre telephoned to Daladier in Paris that the message had fallen on deaf ears. Daladier responded, 'Then I put my trust in God and the strength of the French nation.' (The FA recorded the exchange.)

Unlike September 1938, this time the voices against war were in the minority. The army General Staff anticipated 'White' with barely disguised relish. The only influential voice of warning, that of Göring, was not heeded.

Göring was maintaining contacts with high British officials through intermediaries and a Swedish businessman, Birger Dahlerus. That morning, August 26, Lord Halifax had given Dahlerus a letter for Göring; it confirmed the British desire for a peaceful settlement, but stressed the need for a few days to reach it. Was this again the spirit of appeasement? It required the most cunning cultivation; Hitler asked Dahlerus to join them, gave him several proposals to convey to London, and sent him back.

Afterwards, he lay awake in the darkness of his chancellery bedroom, and brooded on whether to take the plunge now or postpone this war for two

years more. All his instincts told him that he must attack now. Admittedly, the FA intercepts showed little sign of the western powers ditching Poland yet; but perhaps they were counting on Hitler backing down again, as he had on the twenty-fifth.

It was now Sunday August 27. A flak battery mounted guard on the Adlon Hotel where most of the Reichstag deputies were staying. During the day, the Nazi wiretappers heard Holman, the secretary of the absent British ambassador, reassuring an American colleague that Henderson was urging London to avoid a war; but Holman predicted that Polish truculence might still be a big obstacle. Goebbels brought his State secretary Leopold Gutterer, wearing the black uniform of an SS Brigadeführer, and bearing a one-page propaganda ministry report on German public opinion: the public was unanimously against war. Hitler was furious, but Himmler backed Gutterer, saying that the Gestapo reports were painting the same grim picture. 'It is very grave,' recorded Goebbels. 'But the Führer will pull us through. On Poland our minimum demand is Danzig and a corridor across their corridor. Maximum – that's a matter of record. The Führer can't abandon our minimum demand. And he'll get his way. It's become a matter of honour. Nobody can say what will transpire. The Führer is glad we don't have a monarchy any more. The Italy business has been declared top state secret. Death penalty for treason.'

Hitler finally met the disgruntled Reichstag deputies in the ambassadors' suite of the chancellery at 5:30 P.M. They recognised that he had spent a sleepless night. His voice was hoarse and his movements and expressions were loose and disjointed. Bormann noted in his diary, 'For the time being the Reichstag will not sit. After a brief speech the Reichstag deputies were sent home by the Führer.' Hitler told them that things looked grave, but he had resolved to settle the eastern problem *so oder so.* His minimum demand was for the return of Danzig and a solution of the Corridor problem; his maximum demand was for whatever a war would bring him – and he would fight that war 'with the most brutal and inhuman methods.' Like Frederick the Great he was willing to stake everything on one gamble. Mussolini's attitude was, he suggested, in their best interests. War would be hard, perhaps even hopeless: 'But as long as I live there will be no talk of capitulation.' He regretted that his pact with Stalin had been so widely misinterpreted. The USSR was no longer a Bolshevik state, he argued, but an authoritarian military dictatorship like their own. He had made a pact with the Devil to drive out Beelzebub. 'If any one of you believes that my

actions have not been inspired by my devotion to Germany, I give him the right to shoot me down.' The deputies applauded, but only thinly.

FOOD RATIONING was introduced on August 28, 1939, without warning. The rationing was evident at Hitler's own breakfast table that morning. But he came downstairs in brilliant mood, because he had learned during the night that the Swedish businessman Dahlerus had returned from London with news that the British were seriously considering his offer. Hitler boasted to his staff that he had managed to knock Britain out of the game.

When Brauchitsch reported to him, Hitler made no bones about his strategy: he would demand Danzig, right of transit across the Polish Corridor, and a Saar-type plebiscite there. Britain would probably accept these proposals, Poland would reject them, and the split would then be wide open. Hitler instructed the foreign ministry to draft a set of formal proposals along these lines, for the British government to study. The proposals – sixteen in all – were so moderate that one of his diplomats termed it 'a real League of Nations document.' He read them out to Keitel in the conservatory. The general naively replied, 'I find them astoundingly moderate.'

At 3:22 P.M. Brauchitsch telephoned the General Staff from the chancellery to the effect that the provisional new date was September 1. Colonel von Vormann wrote that afternoon: 'Hitler is in a brilliant mood. He's confident that we can position Britain so that we only have Poland to deal with. Everybody's guessing at what Henderson is bringing back with him. He took off from London at 4:30 P.M. Not a hint has reached us so far.'

Henderson arrived at 10:30 P.M. Meissner and Brückner conducted him to the Führer's study. He handed over the British reply to Hitler's 'offer' of the twenty-fifth. It was not what Hitler expected at all: the British announced that they had received a 'definite assurance' from the Poles that they were prepared to negotiate. Hitler replied that he was still minded to deal with Poland on a 'very reasonable basis' – no doubt thinking of the still-unrevealed sixteen-point proposals. He told Henderson that he would examine the British reply the next day. Henderson assured him, 'We took two days to formulate our answer. I'm in no hurry.' 'But I am,' said Hitler.*

A fragment of Heinrich Himmler's typescript diary casts an unsavoury shaft of light on the tenebrous inner workings of Hitler's mind that evening:

* 'Henderson,' wrote Colonel von Vormann the next day, 'did not bring what we expected, at least so they say. What follows now lies darkly in the future's womb.'

> Ambassador Henderson came to see the Führer at 10:30 P.M. and left the Reich chancellery at 11:45 P.M. Afterward Göring, Hess, Bodenschatz, and I joined the Führer in the conservatory. The Führer was accompanied by Ribbentrop.
>
> He told us what the British offer contained. It was very courteously phrased, but contained nothing of real substance. Altogether he was in a very good mood and mimicked in his inimitable way what Henderson had put forward – speaking German with a thick English accent.
>
> The Führer then indicated that we now have to aim a document at the British (or Poles) that is little less than a masterpiece of diplomacy. He wants to spend tonight thinking it over; because he always gets most of his best ideas in the small hours between five and six A.M.
>
> At this Göring inquired, '*Mein Gott*, don't you get any sleep even now? Or have you got insomnia again?' The Führer replied that he often dozes from three to four o'clock in the morning and then suddenly wakes up to find the problems arrayed in pristine clarity before his eyes. Then he jumps up and jots down a few key words in pencil. He himself doesn't know how it happens – all he does know is that in the wee hours of the morning everything that might confuse or distract disappears.

Sure enough, by the time Hitler awoke the next morning, August 29, his stratagem was clear. He would 'accept' the British proposals for negotiations with Poland – but he would give Warsaw just one day to send a plenipotentiary to Berlin. They would, of course, refuse. Alternatively, if they agreed, on the thirtieth the Pole would have to arrive; the next day the talks would break down, and on September 1 'White' could begin, as planned. As an Abwehr colonel noted in his diary: 'The Führer has told Ribbentrop, Himmler, Bodenschatz, etc., "Tonight I'm going to hatch something diabolical for the Poles – something they'll choke on."' Weizsäcker, equally well informed, wrote soon after three A.M. in his diary: 'Göring has told the Führer, "Let's stop trying to break the bank!" to which the Führer retorted, "It's the only game I've ever played – breaking banks."'

The reply that Hitler handed to the British ambassador at seven P.M. reflected his new stratagem. It said that he would approve of direct negotiations with Warsaw – and 'counted on the arrival' of a Polish plenipotentiary the next day. He would also agree to guarantee Poland's new frontiers – but only in association with the Soviet government. Henderson objected, 'This sounds very much like an ultimatum.' Hitler replied that it would

only take ninety minutes for a Pole to fly to Berlin from Warsaw. 'My soldiers are asking me: Yes or No?' To underline the point, Henderson found Keitel outside the study as he left. He ironically asked, 'Busy today, Herr Generaloberst?'

On August 30, Hitler conferred all afternoon with his commanders in chief (except of course Raeder, who was still sulking over the Albrecht affair). His timetable now allowed little leeway. He was sure that no Polish plenipotentiary would arrive, and the FA wiretaps on the British embassy revealed that London shared that view. Henderson was heard at eleven a.m. complaining, 'You can't just conjure a Polish representative from out of a hat.'

Soon after five p.m. a strange FA wiretap report reached Hitler. The British foreign office had telephoned Henderson that Neville Chamberlain was less impressed than his ambassador by the clamour arising from the Reich chancellery, 'as he's been over there himself' and, by implication, knew these people.

> The Voice [speaking from the London end] continued that they are really on the right track now: They [the Germans] really mustn't expect to get away with it again by summoning people to them, handing over documents to them, and forcing them to sign on the dotted line. All that's a thing of the past now.

That did it: Hitler instructed Ribbentrop to read out the sixteen-point proposals to Henderson when the ambassador came that evening, but on no account to hand over the document. At 10:30 p.m. the FA monitored a British embassy official, Sir George Ogilvie-Forbes, telling Attolico that they were all still 'twiddling their thumbs' waiting for the telegram of reply from London.

Precisely at midnight, Henderson arrived at the chancellery. When he inquired whether the German proposals had now been drafted, Ribbentrop airily replied that they had: but they were now superseded as Poland had sent no plenipotentiary. Ribbentrop read them out to show how 'reasonable' they were. At midnight Hitler related all this to Dr. Goebbels: 'The British,' recorded the diarist, 'are still hanging tough. Not a peep out of Poland yet. The Führer thinks there will be war. Italy's defection is not all that bad for us, as Italy is the most vulnerable to attack by the Entente powers. The Führer has drafted a memorandum: Danzig to be German, a

plebiscite in the Corridor in twelve months' time on the basis of 1918; fifty-one percent of the vote to be decisive. Loser to get a one-kilometre-wide corridor across the corridor. Minorities problems to be examined by an international commission. When the time is ripe the Führer will toss this document to the world community.'

A few minutes after Ambassador Henderson left, the Führer sent for Colonel Schmundt. At 12:30 A.M. he issued the code word once again: 'Case White.' Immediately after that he retired to bed.

THROUGHOUT THE next day, August 31, Hitler was calm and self-assured. He had made up his mind and nothing would now induce him to change it.

The FA knew that Henderson had advised the Polish embassy to telephone Warsaw for urgent instructions. At 8:30 A.M. Henderson had urgently telephoned the embassy again, warning that an unquestionably reliable source had informed him that there would be war if Poland did not undertake some move over the next two or three hours. The Polish ambassador Lipski, however, refused even to come to the telephone.

Soon after midday the FA's intercept of Warsaw's explicit instructions to him was in Hitler's hands: Lipski was 'not to enter into any concrete negotiations,' he was merely to hand a Polish government communication to the Reich government. Thus the Nazis knew that the Poles were merely stalling for time. Lipski went to ground – 'He can't be found,' recorded Goebbels, 'for hours at a time. Poland is obviously playing for time.' It worried the minister that Field Marshal Göring, the Luftwaffe's commander in chief, was 'still sceptical,' but he consoled himself in his diary: 'The Führer still does not believe Britain will intervene. Nobody can say as yet. The SS is given special orders for the coming night.'

Göring called a ministerial conference at his operational HQ outside Potsdam that day. State secretary Herbert Backe recorded:

> Today again at Göring's operations HQ. . . Bormann optimistic. G[öring] said things look good. Poles wanted to prevaricate, we are determined. Decision in 24 to 48 hours. Instead of Mussolini-Stalin. [Göring] mentioned publication of something or other that may just keep Britain out. . . Unfortunately we forfeited surprise element, will cost a few hundred thousand more [lives]. But then we have the upper hand. [Need only defend] frontier in west and air approaches to coast from Holland to Denmark (in addition to those to the west!). Big danger is to the Ruhr.

> As the new frontier is short, massive demobilisation of troops probable after Poland's defeat. And then relentless rearmament against Britain.

There is other evidence of Hitler's beliefs in Colonel von Vormann's notes that day: 'The Führer,' he wrote, 'is firmly convinced that France and Britain will just put on an act of waging war.'

Then, shortly before one P.M. on August 31, the OKW issued Hitler's official executive order for war. When Ribbentrop came around soon afterward, Hitler disclosed to him: 'I've given the order. I've set the ball rolling.' To this the foreign minister replied, 'And the best of luck to you!'

Hitler instructed Ribbentrop to 'fob off' the Polish ambassador should he try for an interview. During the afternoon Lipski did indeed ask to see either Hitler or Ribbentrop. Brauchitsch heard through Canaris of Lipski's request, and told Hitler; the Führer replied at four P.M. that he did not intend to receive the Pole, and confirmed that 'White' was still on.

When Ribbentrop finally deigned to see Lipski at six P.M., he merely asked the ambassador whether he was authorised to negotiate. The interview, the first between diplomatic representatives of Poland and Germany since March 1939, was concluded in a matter of minutes. As the ambassador left, all telephone lines to the Polish embassy were cut.

Everything had gone just as Hitler planned. Three hours later, German radio was interrupted with a broadcast of the 'ultra-reasonable' sixteen-point offer that Warsaw had refused even to look at. At 10:30 P.M. there were the first radio mentions of serious border incidents, including an armed 'Polish' raid on the transmitter at Gleiwitz. Other 'provocations by the Poles' were reported near Kreuzburg and Hochlinden. Over two million Germans were now under arms, and the dedicated and incorruptible civil servants of the Forschungsamt could see signs that the western alliance was crumbling. Monsieur Coulondre phoned Henderson about Lipski's visit to Ribbentrop and said that the Pole had merely handed over a Note, without receiving the German proposals (which Henderson had unofficially obtained from Göring during the day). Henderson exploded, 'But what's the point of that! It's ludicrous, the whole thing!' In a later conversation a heated argument broke out, which ended with both ambassadors slamming down their telephones.

On the eve of war, the West was in disarray.

Entr'acte: His First Silesian War

By the time that Hitler awoke, his armies had already advanced many miles into Poland. They had stormed the frontier at 4:45 A.M. that morning, September 1, 1939, while the Luftwaffe had bombed the enemy airfields and supply dumps.

In many places Hitler's undercover operations had run into stiff resistance. Polish railway officials on Danzig's neutral soil had managed to hold up the 'goods train,' bound from East Prussia for the Dirschau bridge, at nearby Simonsdorf station.

The SA massacred these interfering Polish railwaymen in reprisal during the day. By the time the train with its hidden cargo of German sappers and infantry reached the Dirschau bridge the gates were closed and the lines blocked. The Luftwaffe had attacked the demolition fuses on time, but brave Poles had repaired them and thus the mile-long bridge across the Vistula was blown.

A second bridge at Graudenz had been assigned to a long-range Abwehr holding squad, operating in plain clothes. These men penetrated into Polish territory, only to be arrested by an officious and trigger-happy German army lieutenant; in the distance they heard that bridge, too, destroyed.

In Danzig itself the Polish post office building held out all day while Polish army officers disguised as postmen directed the defence. Thirty-eight Polish 'postmen' survived the siege: those found to be wearing Polish army underwear were executed. It was a rough war for 'illegals' on both sides. An Abwehr 'army,' pulled together by two captains – Ebbinghaus and Fleck – from volunteers, SA guerrillas, the Sudeten German Free Corps, and Polish and German agents, had infiltrated Poland at about three A.M. to seize railway junctions, coal-mines, and factories. On this first day alone Ebbinghaus and Fleck lost 174 dead and 133 injured of the five hundred cut-throats

they had set out with. As for Jablunka, the Poles now had time to blow up both the railroad tunnels.

HITLER DRESSED that morning in a baggy field-grey army uniform, having discarded his Party tunic for the last time the night before. At ten, he drove with his staff through Berlin's almost deserted streets to the Kroll Opera-house to address the Reichstag. The same nervous tension gripped him as his little convoy of cars negotiated the fifteen-foot-wide approach passage to the Kroll Opera-house – one of Berlin's best vantage points for an assassin. A hundred of the seats in front of him were empty, these deputies having been drafted with millions of others into the Wehrmacht ranks.

In his speech he formally gave notice that they were at war with Poland. He publicly thanked his comrade Mussolini for his understanding attitude and 'offer of support' – but, he added, the Italians must understand that he needed no outside aid to fight this war. The speech rang with hollow promises: the West Wall would always remain Germany's frontier in the west; his pact with Russia eliminated every prospect that there might be a conflict between them. With a gesture to his uniform, he proclaimed: 'I shall never wear another, until victory is ours; not as long as I live!'

The deputies applauded frequently; but they applauded with feeling only when Hitler announced that he would fight a chivalrous war. 'I shall undertake each operation in such a manner that women and children are neither the target nor the victims.'

He stayed on in Berlin, as he believed that the time for diplomacy was not over. In London, Lord Halifax had summoned the German chargé d'affaires, Theo Kordt, but merely complained that the German action against Poland 'created a very serious situation.' Hitler took heart. At 5:36 P.M. the FA did intercept London's instructions to notify Berlin that Britain would stand by Poland if the Nazi troops were not withdrawn: but no deadline was given. Colonel von Vormann, writing at six P.M., observed: 'The big question – will Britain really stand by Poland? – is wide open.' Almost at once the Forschungsamt intercepted an incautious remark by a British embassy official, that the Note was *not* an ultimatum – just a warning.

EARLY ON September 2, Mussolini made an attempt to halt the avalanche. He proposed a cease-fire and an immediate Five-Power peace conference; France was said to be in agreement. For some hours Hitler appears to have taken seriously the possibility of cease-fire. In conference this same day he

urged the Wehrmacht to seize as much Polish territory as possible over the next few days, particularly the whole Polish Corridor. At 9:20 A.M. his army adjutant phoned Rommel not to expect the Führer to transfer to his HQ that day either.

Meanwhile the Führer's residence teemed with officials; Brückner moved regularly through the rooms, inquiring each person's business and tactfully easing the idle out into the Wilhelm Strasse. Colonel von Vormann jotted in his diary: 'Mood is very confident.'

In a noisy House of Commons, Neville Chamberlain had insisted that Germany's forces totally withdraw from Poland. The FA monitored this statement being telegraphed to the British embassy at 7:50 P.M., and there was a postscript: 'See my immediately following telegram.' Henderson was heard telephoning Coulondre: 'I don't know what the next telegram will be, but I can guess.'

Half an hour after midnight – it was now Sunday, September 3 – Henderson received the 'immediately following telegram.' Its text was as he had feared. 'You should ask for an appointment with Minister for Foreign Affairs at nine A.M., Sunday morning. Instructions will follow.'

There was no doubt in Hitler's mind, reading the FA intercept of this, as to what the instructions would be. Britain was about to tender a war ultimatum to the Reich. At two A.M. Hitler ordered an adjutant to telephone to Rommel that the Führer's HQ was to expect him to arrive in twenty-four hours' time.

AT THE foreign ministry, an interpreter was given the thankless task of receiving the formal British ultimatum from Henderson. At eleven A.M. this ultimatum expired. At 11:30 A.M. Henderson saw Ribbentrop and informed him that Britain was now at war with the Reich. Ten minutes later, the FA heard the British embassy report to London that Ribbentrop had handed over an eleven-page reply, refusing to give any assurance as to the withdrawal of German troops and putting the blame squarely on Britain: 'The Germans,' said the intercept report, 'were very polite.'

Colonel von Vormann's contemporary account that day deserves quoting here:

> Now the worst has happened, after all! . . . I'm not a belly-acher or defeatist, but the future looks very grim to me. This is just what we didn't want. Until this morning the idea was to play for time somehow and to

postpone the decision. Even today the Führer still believes that the western powers are only going to stage a phoney war, so to speak. That's why I've had to transmit an order to the Army at 1:50 P.M. not to commence hostilities [in the west] ourselves.

I can't share his belief. He's got the wrong idea of the British and French psyche.

From the contortions that Britain had gone through to produce even this ultimatum Hitler was certain of her unwillingness to fight; he said as much to Grand Admiral Raeder that afternoon. Raeder penned a sour survey that day, beginning: 'Today there began a war with Britain and France with which – to judge from all the Führer's utterances hitherto – we should not have had to reckon before about 1944 . . .' Goebbels too was beset by misgivings, warning Hitler in a twenty-five page memorandum entitled 'Thoughts on the Outbreak of War, 1939' that there was little enthusiasm for this new conflict and that Britain, poisoned by 'Jewish capital,' would fight to the last man: 'Britain,' he pointed out, 'is governed by the old men of 1914 who are incapable of thinking straight or logically because of their hate complexes.'

In the event however Hitler proved right again. Field Marshal Göring – no admirer of Ribbentrop's – volunteered to fly at once to London. Hitler forbade him to undertake any such venture. Oblivious of the audience of officials, Hitler dictated in rapid succession the proclamations to the German people, to the Nazi party, and to the Wehrmacht in east and west. In them, he branded Britain as the eternal warmonger, whose aim over two hundred years had been to defeat whichever Continental power was strongest, spurning no lies, libels, or deceits to that end. He wasted no words on France. He scanned the drafts and released them to the press. Secretary Christa Schroeder wrote that evening to a woman friend: 'We're planning to leave Berlin in a few hours' time. . . . As for me, I'm ready to go through thick and thin with the Chief. If our luck runs out – I'd rather not think about that, but *if* – then my own life doesn't matter to me any more.'

A QUARTER-CENTURY before, Kaiser Wilhelm's armies had marched off to battle through cheering crowds, garlanded with flowers, while bands played. How different was Adolf Hitler's departure for the Polish front that night! At the Anhalt railroad station, a solitary stationmaster waited at the barrier to greet him and his staff. The special train *Amerika* waited on the cordoned-

off platform, its locomotive panting steam, while the station's coloured signal lamps reflected from the metal of the light flak batteries mounted on flat-top wagons at each end.

At nine P.M. the long train hauled out of the station, toward the battlefield in Poland.

'Almighty God,' Hitler had written in *Mein Kampf*, 'bless our arms when the time comes, be righteous just as Thou hast always been, judge for Thyself whether we have now merited our freedom. Lord, bless our fight!'



French ambassador Robert Coulondre leaves Berlin on September 2, 1939 as his country prepares to declare war on Germany (AUTHOR'S COLLECTION).

Part III: Hitler's War Begins

RIENZI: *'Der Tag ist da, die Stunde naht*
Zur Sühne tausendjähr'ger Schmach!'
RICHARD WAGNER'S OPERA *Rienzi*



Preserved in miniature on photographic plates (see page 220), the secret 1939 diaries of Hitler's propaganda minister Dr Joseph Goebbels remained hidden in Moscow archives until 1992, when the author first retrieved and deciphered them.

'White'

THE SPECIAL train *Amerika* was parked in a dusty Pomeranian railroad station surrounded by parched and scented pine trees and wooden barrack huts baked dry by the central European sun. It was a cumbersome assemblage of twelve or fifteen coaches hauled by two locomotives, immediately followed by armoured wagons bristling with 20-millimetre anti-aircraft guns. Hitler's personal coach came first. In the drawing room, there was an oblong table with eight chairs grouped around it. The four remaining compartments in Hitler's coach were occupied by his adjutants and man-servants.

The nerve centre was the 'command coach' attached to his own quarters. One half was taken up by a long conference room dominated by a map table, and the other by Hitler's communications centre, equipped with teleprinter and radio-telephone. He was to spend most of his waking hours in this hot, confined space for the next two weeks. Here Keitel introduced to the Führer for the first time his chief of operations, Major General Alfred Jodl. A year younger than Hitler, Jodl was to be his principal strategic adviser until the last days of war.

In the train, as at the chancellery, the brown Nazi party uniform dominated the scene. Hitler hardly intervened in the conduct of the Polish campaign. He would appear in the command coach at nine A.M. to hear Jodl's personal report on the morning situation. His first inquiry of Colonel von Vormann was always about the dangerous western front situation, for of thirty German divisions left to hold the three-hundred-mile line, only twelve were up to scratch; and against them France might at any time unleash her army of 110 divisions. On September 4, an awed Colonel von Vormann wrote: 'Meanwhile, a propaganda war has broken out in the west.

Will the Führer prove right after all? They say that the French have hung out a banner at Saarbrücken reading *We won't fire the first shot.*'

Poland was overrun in three weeks. Neither the bravery of her soldiers nor the promises of her allies prevented this overwhelming defeat. The gasoline engine, the tank, and the dive-bomber should not have taken the Poles by surprise, but they did. Hitler's armoured and mechanised units encircled the enemy armies while they were still massed to the west of the Vistula, where they were deployed in preparation for the drive to Berlin – the thrust which would bring about an anti-Nazi revolution in Germany. What had been planned on the maps of the German General Staff throughout the summer now took precise shape in the marshlands and fields of Poland in September 1939.

Hitler listened unobtrusively to all that went on about him in the command coach. His being there did not distract his staff, as one member wrote, except that they were forbidden to smoke in his presence – a prohibition that fell heavily on his cigar-smoking naval adjutant. Hitler's only strategic influence had been on the 'grand pincer' plan, with its powerful southward thrust with mechanised forces from East Prussia behind the Vistula. He had also attempted to veto the appointments of generals Johannes Blaskowitz to command the Eighth Army and Günther von Kluge the Fourth Army – the former because he recalled that in manoeuvres three years before, the general had not committed his tanks as he himself would have considered best. Hitler did later find fault with the conduct of the Eighth Army's operations. This produced the only real crisis of the campaign; but the crisis occurred precisely where Hitler had expected, and he had ordered countermeasures in anticipation.

At eight o'clock on the morning of September 4, General von Bock, the commander of Army Group North, joined Rommel in reporting to Hitler, and the three men set out on an extended tour of the battle areas.

Hitler rode in a heavy six-wheeled Mercedes, and the rest of his staff and escort followed in six identical vehicles. Seventy or more cars packed with Party and ministerial personages jostled for position behind the Führer's convoy.

At each brief halt Hitler's generals and Party leaders elbowed their way into the foreground of the photographs being taken and then galloped back to their cars to urge their chauffeurs into even closer proximity to the Führer's Mercedes. Once when Bormann angrily rebuked Rommel for these

scenes of disorder, the general coolly snapped back: 'I'm not a kindergarten teacher. You sort them out, if you want!'

The Wehrmacht was already steamrollering northward toward Thorn. These were fields long steeped in German blood. On the sixth Hitler toured the battlefield of Tucheler Heide, where a powerful Polish corps had been encircled. (Apparently convinced that the German tanks were only tinplate dummies, the Polish cavalry had attacked with lances couched.) A radio message told Hitler that Kraków was now in German hands. At ten P.M. that evening, Colonel von Vormann briefed him on the western front. ('The phoney war continues,' he wrote later that day. 'So far not a shot has been fired on the western front. On both sides there are just huge loudspeakers barking at each other, with each side trying to make it clear to the other how impossible their behaviour is and how stupid their governments are.') Vormann talked of the dissolution of the Polish army: 'All that remains now is a rabbit hunt. Militarily, the war is over.' Beaming with pleasure Hitler took the colonel's hand in both of his and pumped it up and down.

The situation in the west had a comic-opera quality. There were secret exchanges of food and drink between the French and German lines. Hitler went out of his way to avoid provoking British public opinion: when Göring begged for permission to bomb the British fleet, Hitler rejected the request. He was furious when Britain announced on September 4 that one of her transatlantic liners, the *Athenia*, had been torpedoed by a German submarine. Admiral Raeder assured him that none of their handful of U-boats could have been near the alleged incident. Hitler suspected that Churchill had himself ordered the liner sunk to arouse American public opinion. Shortly afterward, however, Raeder advised him confidentially that a U-boat commander had now admitted the sinking. The liner, he contended, had been blacked-out and zigzagging. Raeder and Hitler agreed to keep the truth to themselves.

HITLER'S TERRITORIAL plans for Poland were still indeterminate. In a secret speech to his generals on August 22 he had set as his goal 'the annihilation of the Polish forces' rather than any particular line on the map. But on September 7 he also mentioned to his army Commander in Chief, General von Brauchitsch, the possibility of founding an independent Ukraine. Hitler's notion was to mark the ultimate frontier between Asia and the West by gathering together the racial German remnants scattered about the Balkans, Russia, and the Baltic states to populate an eastern frontier strip along

either the River Bug or the Vistula. Warsaw would become a centre of German culture; or alternatively it would be razed and replaced by green fields on either side of the Vistula. Between the Reich and the 'Asian' frontier, some form of Polish national state would exist, to house the ethnic Poles – a lesser species of some ten million in all. To stifle the growth of new chauvinistic centres, the Polish intelligentsia would be 'extracted and accommodated elsewhere.' With this independent rump Poland, Hitler planned to negotiate a peace settlement that had some semblance of legality and thereby spike the guns of Britain and France. If however this rump Poland fell apart, the Vilna area could be offered to Lithuania, and the Galician and Polish Ukraine could be granted independence – in which case, as Canaris noted, Keitel's instructions were that his Abwehr-controlled Ukrainians 'are to provoke an uprising in the Galician Ukraine with the destruction of the Polish and Jewish element as its aim.'

Hitler's army had fallen upon the hated Poles with well-documented relish. Colonel Eduard Wagner, as Quartermaster General initially responsible for occupation policy, wrote privately on September 4: 'Brutal guerrilla war has broken out everywhere, and we are ruthlessly stamping it out. We won't be reasoned with. We have already sent out emergency courts, and they are in continual session. The harder we strike, the quicker there will be peace again.' And a week later: 'We are now issuing fierce orders which I have drafted today myself. Nothing like the death sentence! There's no other way in occupied territories.' Hitler and his generals were confronted by what they saw as evidence that Asia did indeed begin just beyond the old Reich frontier. In the western Polish town of Bydgoszcz (Bromberg) the local Polish commander had ordered the massacre of several thousand German residents on the charge that some of them had taken part in the hostilities. Göring's paratroopers were being shot on the spot when captured by the Poles. The population was instructed, for example, to pour gasoline over disabled German tanks and set them on fire. 'Against Germany the Polish people fight side by side with the Polish soldiers, building barricades and combating the German operations and positions by every means they can.'

HITLER'S SPECIAL train, *Amerika*, had left for Upper Silesia on the ninth. It finally halted in a railway siding at Illnau. The air outside was thick with the hot dust-particles of mid-September. His secretary Christa Schroeder wrote this plaintive description in a private letter:

> All day long the sun beats down on the compartments, and we just wilt in the tropical heat. . . . The Chief drives off in the morning leaving us condemned to wait for his return. . . . Recently we were parked one night near a field hospital through which a big shipment of casualties was just passing. . . . Those who tour Poland with the Chief see a lot, but it's not easy for them because the enemy are such cowards – shooting in the back and ambushing – and because it is difficult to protect the Chief, who has taken to driving around as though he were in Germany, standing up in his open car even in the most hazardous areas. . . . On the very first day he drove through a copse still swarming with Polacks – just half an hour earlier they had wiped out an unarmed German medical unit. One of the medics escaped and gave him an eye-witness account. . . . Once again, the Führer was standing in full view of everybody on a hummock, with soldiers streaming toward him from all sides. Obviously it gives the soldiers' morale a colossal boost to see the F. in the thick of the danger with them, but I still think it's too risky. We can only trust in God to protect him.

'The Führer is in the best of moods; I often get into conversation with him,' wrote General Rommel. 'He says that in eight or ten days it'll all be over in the east and then our entire battle-hardened Wehrmacht will move west. But I think the French are giving up the struggle. Their soldiers are bathing in the Rhine, unmolested by us. This time,' he concluded, 'we are definitely going to win through!'

That day, September 12, Hitler summoned Göring, Brauchitsch, and Keitel and flatly forbade them to provoke the French in any way. Hitler had walked into the command coach just as Canaris was outlining to Keitel the unfavourable effect a German bombardment of Warsaw would have on foreign opinion. When asked for news from the western front, Canaris craftily replied that the French were systematically marshalling troops and artillery opposite Saarbrücken for a major offensive.* Hitler remained politely incredulous. 'I can hardly believe that the French will attack at Saarbrücken, the very point at which our fortifications are strongest.' Jodl added that the

* Canaris had deliberately exaggerated reports of a planned minor French attack in the hope of disrupting Hitler's Polish campaign strategy, according to Colonel Lahousen, who accompanied him.

artillery preparation for a major offensive would take at least three weeks, so the French offensive could not begin before October. 'Yes,' responded Hitler, 'and in October it is already quite chilly, and our men will be sitting in their protective bunkers while the French have to wait in the open air to attack. And even if the French should manage to penetrate one of the weaker points of the West Wall, we will in the meantime have brought our divisions across from the east and given them a thrashing they'll never forget.'

Hitler's tours of these Polish battlefields were his first real contact with 'the east.' They reinforced his unhealthy fantasies about the 'sub-humans' and the Jews. Was this still Europe? Indiscriminately scattered about the untended acres were wretched wooden hutlike dwellings with thatched roofs. At the roadsides, knots of submissive Polish civilians stood in the swirling dust of Hitler's motorcade. Among them he glimpsed Jews in high-crowned hats and caftans, their hair in ritual ringlets; they looked for all the world like figures out of mediæval antisemitic drawings. Time had stood still here for centuries. The Jews were the enemy.

Dr. Chaim Weizmann, the president of the Jewish Agency, had written to Neville Chamberlain promising explicitly that all Jews everywhere would fight on the side of the democracies against Nazi Germany. *The Times* published Weizmann's letter on September 6, and Hitler no doubt considered it a Jewish declaration of war. He often referred to it in later years – by which time his grim prophecy was being cruelly fulfilled. 'For the first time we are now implementing genuine ancient Jewish law,' he boasted on January 30, 1942. 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'

For the pogroms that now began, Himmler and Heydrich provided the initiative and drive themselves. Hitler's only order to the Reichsführer SS, Himmler, in this context was one for the general consolidation of the German racial position. The army generals became restless about deeds being enacted by the SS in Poland, but Himmler reassured them in a secret speech at Koblenz in March 1940, of which his handwritten notes survive. He explained that now for the first time, under Adolf Hitler, the solution of the thousand-year-old problem of Poland was possible: only the infusion into Poland of Germanic blood had made some Poles great and dangerous; now that Germany was strong she must see to the 'final annexation of the area, its purification and Germanisation.' But a 'Bolshevik method' – which Himmler defined in a memorandum two months later as downright extermination of the minority races – was 'impossible.' He conceded that the 'leading brains of the resistance' were being executed but this was not,

stressed Himmler, 'a wild excess by subordinate commanders – still less by me.' Here Himmler's jottings show a German phrase – *Weiss sehr genau, was vorgeht* – which might be translated as either '[I] know precisely what is happening' or '[He] knows precisely what is happening.'* Two weeks later Himmler spoke in a Ruhr city. Here his notes read: 'The Führer's mission to the Reichsführer SS: the quality of the German species. Blood our most supreme value. New territories not a political, but an ethnological problem.'

As in Austria and Czechoslovakia, the advancing tide of German army units had been followed by Heydrich's police net. Each army had its task force (*Einsatzgruppe*), and each corps had an *Einsatzkommando* of a hundred officials in Waffen SS uniform with SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*, security service) emblems on their sleeves. Their primary role was Intelligence – seizing enemy documents – and what the army orders more formally described as 'combating any anti-Reich or anti-German elements in rear areas.' According to Heydrich, writing ten months later, the special order directing the task forces to conduct 'security operations of a political and ideological nature in these new territories' was issued by Hitler himself.

Parallel to the SS task forces attached to the armies, there was an independent 'special duties' task force under the command of the arrogant and brutal SS General Udo von Woyrsch. When he was eventually kicked out of Poland on German army orders, he loudly protested that he had received direct instructions from the Führer via Himmler to spread 'fear and terror' to dissuade the Poles from committing acts of violence. (Himmler's orders to Woyrsch survive, dated September 3: he was charged with the 'radical suppression of the incipient Polish insurrection in the newly occupied parts of Upper Silesia'; Hitler is not mentioned.)

There is no surviving record of when – or if – Heydrich conferred with Hitler during the Polish campaign. But many of Hitler's generals learned

* General Ulex, who was present, recalled this after the war as 'I am doing nothing of which the Führer does not know.' (*Cf.* Professor Helmut Krausnick, 'Hitler and the Murders in Poland,' *VfZ*, 1963, 196ff.) However, nobody else recalled this. And General von Leeb, whose diary has been available to me, would certainly have mentioned such a candid statement in it, given his pronounced Christian convictions. Ulex had been humiliated by Hitler late in 1938. Let it be noted however that Colonel Eduard Wagner wrote his wife on the following day: 'In the evening Himmler spoke to the Commander in Chiefs at Koblenz. More about that verbally . . .'

from him that he planned to eliminate the Polish intelligentsia one way or another; they joined a conspiracy of silence.

Hitler's blood was already boiling at the ponderous court-martial procedures being implemented against Polish guerrillas – he wanted their swift and summary execution. On September 7 he had met with Brauchitsch in his private coach and for two hours discussed the political future of Poland. He instructed the army to abstain from interfering in the SS operations, and the next day he issued a set of guidelines in which the emphasis was on the appointment of Party functionaries as civil commissars to do the dirty work in Poland.

Little is known in detail of what Hitler told Brauchitsch. After talking to Halder on the ninth, Eduard Wagner noted in his diary: 'It is the Führer's and Göring's intention to destroy and exterminate the Polish nation. More than that cannot even be hinted at in writing.' The same day, Colonel von Vormann wrote: 'The war in Poland is over. . . . The Führer keeps discussing plans for the future of Poland – interesting but scarcely suited for committing to writing.' Only General Walther Heitz, the new military governor of West Prussia, lifted a corner of this veil of secrecy in writing up a conference with Brauchitsch on September 10: 'Other business: I am to rule the area with the mailed fist. Combat troops are over-inclined toward a false sense of chivalry.'

That the nature of the SS task force operations had been explained to Brauchitsch was established when Admiral Canaris reminded Keitel of the damage the planned 'widespread executions' of Polish clergy and nobility would inflict on the Wehrmacht's reputation. Keitel retorted that this had long been decided on by the Führer, who had made it plain to Brauchitsch 'that if the Wehrmacht wants nothing to do with it, they will merely have to put up with the SS and Gestapo appearing side by side with them.' Hence the creation of parallel civil authorities in Poland. On them would fall the job of 'demographic extermination,' as Canaris recorded Keitel's phrase. When Heydrich informed Colonel Wagner that the planned 'mopping up' of Poland would embrace 'the Jewry, intelligentsia, clergy, and nobility,' the army officer asked only that the murderous orders flow directly from Heydrich to his task forces in the field.

But Heydrich had not in fact secured Hitler's approval for liquidating the Jews. On September 14 he reported to his staff on his tour of the task forces. The discreet conference record states: 'The Chief [Heydrich] enlarged on the Jewish problem in Poland and set out his views on this. The

Reichsführer [Himmler] will put certain suggestions to the Führer, on which only the Führer can decide, as they will also have considerable repercussions abroad.' Hitler, however, favoured only a deportation of the Jews, as became clear to both Brauchitsch and Himmler when they conferred separately with Hitler at Zoppot on September 20. To Brauchitsch he talked only of a ghetto plan for the Jews.

Hitler's somewhat more moderate instructions to Himmler were presumably those echoed by Heydrich to his task force commanders in Berlin next day: the formerly German provinces of Poland would be reannexed to the Reich; an adjacent *Gau*, or district, made up of a Polish-speaking population, would have Kraków as its capital and probably be governed by the Austrian Dr. Arthur Seyss-Inquart. This Gau – the later *Generalgouvernement* – would be a 'kind of no-man's-land' outside the planned East Wall: it would accommodate the Polish Jews. Hitler also authorised Heydrich to unload as many Jews as possible into the Russian zone. To facilitate this expulsion the Jews were to be concentrated in the big Polish cities. They would be joined by the Jews and the remaining thirty thousand gypsies from Germany. Hitler asked Himmler to act as overlord of this resettlement operation – what would in later years be called ethnic cleansing.

For his part, General von Brauchitsch circularised his field commanders thus: 'The police task-forces have been commanded and directed by the Führer to perform certain ethnographical (*volkspolitische*) tasks in the occupied territory.' The only stipulation Brauchitsch made when he met Heydrich on September 22 was that the expulsion operations must not interfere with the army's movements or Germany's economic needs. Heydrich readily agreed.

HITLER'S POSITIVE enjoyment of the battle scenes was undeniable. He visited the front whenever he could. At a divisional headquarters set up in a school within range of the Polish artillery, he made the acquaintance of General von Briesen. Briesen had just lost an arm leading his division into an action which warded off a desperate Polish counterattack by four divisions and cavalry on the flank of the Eighth Army; he had lost eighty officers and fifteen hundred men in the fight, and now he was reporting to his Führer not far from the spot where his father, a Prussian infantry general, had been killed in the Great War. On the fifteenth we find Hitler at Jaroslav, watching his soldiers bridging the river San. On the next day the greatest strategic

triumph of the campaign was complete: the Polish army optimistically assembled at Posen (Poznan) for the attack on Berlin had been encircled, and Kutno had been captured by the Fourth and Eighth armies. Now it was only a matter of days before Warsaw itself fell.

Hitler had begun to debate the fate of that city with Jodl on the fifteenth. He was particularly eager to have the capital in his hands by the time the U.S. Congress reconvened. He hoped that the mere threat of concerted ground and air attack would suffice. He plagued his officers for estimates on how long it would take to starve the city into submission. Early on the sixteenth a German officer carried to the Polish lines an ultimatum giving the commandant six hours in which to surrender. The commandant refused even to receive the ultimatum. He had spent every waking hour preparing the capital for the German assault. All fortifications and defences had been strengthened; every suburban building had been reinforced by sandbags, concrete, and barbed wire, its basement linked by a honeycomb of tunnels to a network of resistance strongpoints; deep antitank trenches cut across Warsaw's main thoroughfares, and there were barricades formed of heaped-up streetcars, cobblestones, and rubble.

As Blaskowitz was later to report: 'What shocked even the most hardened soldier was how at the instigation of their military leaders a misguided population, completely ignorant of the effect of modern weapons, could contribute to the destruction of their own capital.'

At three o'clock on the afternoon of the sixteenth, Luftwaffe aircraft released over Warsaw several tons of leaflets giving the civilian population twelve hours to leave by two specified roads. At six P.M. the next day, the Deutschland Sender broadcast an invitation to the Polish forces to send officers to the German lines for negotiations to begin at ten P.M. Any officers who turned up for negotiations were to be instructed to hand to their commandant an ultimatum calling for the unconditional surrender of the capital by eight A.M. the next day. Arrangements for the evacuation of the diplomatic corps would be made on request. By 11:45 A.M. on the eighteenth no Polish officer had appeared at the German lines. Hitler's attempts to obtain the city's bloodless capitulation were sufficient to give him a clear conscience about destroying Warsaw when the time came.

The Polish government had already escaped to neutral Romania. 'To protect the interests of the Ukrainian and White Russian minorities,' two Soviet army groups invaded eastern Poland in the small hours of September 17. The news reached Hitler's train soon after. At about four A.M. he

entered the command coach, where he found Schmundt waiting with Keitel and Jodl. All of them were grouped around the maps of Poland, guessing at the Soviet army's movements, until the arrival of Ribbentrop, who on Hitler's instructions now revealed to the astonished generals the details of secret arrangements made with Moscow for Poland. 'We decided with Stalin on a demarcation line between the two spheres of interest running along the four rivers – Pissa, Narev, Vistula, and San,' the foreign minister explained as he somewhat crudely drew the line on the map.

BY SEPTEMBER 19, when Hitler and his staff drove into Danzig, the Polish campaign was all but over. How he now privately mocked the foreign ministry Cassandras who had predicted military disaster!* Only the garrisons of Warsaw, Modlin, and Hela were still holding out. As the victorious Führer drove through the streets of Danzig, flowers rained down from the windows. When the convoy of cars stopped outside the ancient Artus Hof, Schmundt was heard to comment, 'It was like this everywhere – in the Rhineland, in Vienna, in the Sudeten territories, and in Memel. Do you still doubt the mission of the Führer?' Here, in a long, columned fourteenth-century hall built in the heyday of the Germanic knightly orders, Hitler delivered a lengthy speech. He compared the humanity with which he was fighting this war with the treatment the Poles had meted out to the German minorities after Pilsudski's death. 'Tens of thousands were deported, maltreated, killed in the most bestial fashion. These sadistic beasts let their perverse instincts run riot and – this pious democratic world looks on without batting one eyelash.' In his peroration he spoke of 'Almighty God, who has now given our arms His blessing.'

Afterward his staff cleared a path for him through the heaving Danzig population packed into the Long Market outside. A bath was provided for the sweat-soaked Führer in one of the patrician houses. He took up quarters for the next week in the roomy sea-front Kasino Hotel at Zoppot, near Danzig. His mood was irrepressible. At midnight two days after his arrival, followed by one of his manservants with a silver tray of champagne glasses, he burst into Jodl's room, where a number of generals were celebrating Keitel's birthday. But his ultimate intentions remained the same. Here at

* Cf. Hewel's unpublished diary, October 10, 1941: 'Triumphant conversation [with the Führer] about the foreign ministry. Who in 1939 believed in victory? The state secretary at the foreign ministry [Weizsäcker]?'

Zoppot Hitler began weighing a course of action as hideous as any that Heydrich was tackling in Poland. About a quarter of a million hospital beds were required for Germany's disproportionately large insane population: of some seven or eight hundred thousand victims of insanity all told, about ten percent were permanently institutionalised. They occupied bed space and the attention of skilled medical personnel which Hitler now urgently needed for the treatment of the casualties of his coming campaigns. According to the later testimony of Dr. Karl Brandt, his personal surgeon, Hitler wanted between forty and sixty percent of the permanently hospitalised insane to be quietly put away.

To his suite at the Kasino Hotel the Führer now summoned his constitutional and medical advisers, and in particular Hans Lammers, chief of the Reich chancellery, and Dr. Leonardo Conti, chief medical officer of the Reich, together with the ubiquitous Martin Bormann and Reichsleiter Philipp Bouhler, chief of the 'Führer's chancellery.' (Conti's widow still recalls her husband reaching for the encyclopaedia to look up 'Euthanasia' after the Führer's call.) Hitler instructed Dr. Conti that, to meet the requirements of wartime, a program for the painless killing of the incurably insane should be initiated. Dr. Conti questioned whether there was any scientific basis for assuming it would produce eugenic advantages. There was some discussion of the actual mechanics of the program. Dr. Conti proposed the use of narcotics, but in separate discussions with Dr. Brandt, Hitler learned that barbiturates would be too slow to be 'humane' and that most physicians considered carbon monoxide gas the fastest and most peaceful lethal dose. Hitler asked Brandt shortly to investigate which was the fastest way consistent with the least amount of pain.

He had been an enthusiastic advocate of the racial rejuvenation of the German people ever since the Twenties. On the pretext that 20 percent of the German population had hereditary biological defects, the National Socialists had instituted a program of 'racial hygiene' immediately after they came to power; Minister of the Interior Wilhelm Frick was a fervent advocate. In July 1933 the Cabinet had passed the first related law; it was henceforth obligatory for doctors to report on patients with hereditary diseases so that they could be sterilised. An elderly Darwinian (Alfred Ploetz) whom the Reich had made a professor after 1933 was to point out in 1935 that 'the contra-selective effects of war must be offset by an increase in the extermination quotas.' Frick had drafted the necessary laws governing the operations of the local health offices in 1934, parallel to the racial-politics

agencies of the Party which functioned in each Party district. Over the next ten years, tens of thousands of senior medical officials were to pass through special courses in racial hygiene. The economic burden represented by these specimens was explained, and particularly repulsive samples were housed at the institutions as walking laboratory exhibits. In 1935 Hitler openly told Dr. Conti's predecessor that should war come he would 'tackle the euthanasia problem,' since a wartime psychology would reduce the risk of opposition from the church.

But it was not until the end of 1938 that Hitler was directly involved in any euthanasia decisions, and then it was in 'mercy killing.' Bouhler's chancellery had repeatedly submitted to him appeals from patients in intolerable pain, or from their doctors, asking Hitler to exercise the Head of State's prerogative of mercy and permit the doctor to terminate the patient's life without fear of criminal proceedings. When Hitler received such an appeal from the parents of a malformed, blind, and imbecile boy born in Leipzig, he sent Dr. Brandt early in 1939 to examine the child, and he authorised the doctors to put him to sleep. A ministerial decree was eventually passed in August 1939 requiring all midwives to report the details of such deformed new-born babies; a panel of three assessors judged each case, and if all three agreed, the infant was procured from the parents either by deception or by compulsion and quietly put away.

After the Zoppot meeting in September 1939, some time passed without any results. In fact Dr. Conti had become involved in lengthy discussions in which the legal and ethical bases of Hitler's proposals were explored. The consequence of this delay was that Hitler bypassed both Lammers and Conti, and peremptorily dictated onto a sheet of his private stationery an order that considerably enlarged the scope of the euthanasia project:

> Reichsleiter Bouhler and Dr. Brandt, M.D., are herewith given full responsibility to enlarge the powers of certain specified doctors so that they can grant those who are by all human standards incurably ill a merciful death, after the most critical assessment possible of their medical condition. (*Signed*) Adolf Hitler

This Führer Order was symbolically backdated to September 1, the start of what he had envisaged as his 'first Silesian war.' Now it was no longer a local campaign but a bloody crusade in the course of which the German people were to become ennobled by conflict and purged of the impure

elements in their blood and seed. Census forms, ostensibly for statistical survey purposes, were circulated to doctors and hospitals from October 9, 1939. Panels of three assessors then decided the life or death of each patient on the basis of these forms alone. Hitler told Bouhler he wanted a process untrammelled by red tape.

What had begun as the 'mercy killing' of the few was now followed by the programmed elimination of the burdensome tens of thousands of insane; and all this was but a platform for far wider campaigns on which the Reich was to embark now that it was at war.



Hitler put Philipp Bouhler in charge of 'mercy killing.' Out of that grew massacres of quite a different order. He killed himself in 1945 (AUTHOR'S COLLECTION)

Overtures

Hitler's train idled on a siding in outer Pomerania until 9:30 a.m. on September 26, 1939, and then began the eight-hour haul back to Berlin. The journey passed in heavy silence. Jodl must have been in his private compartment, for only Colonel von Vormann was there. For the next few hours Hitler spoke no word but restlessly paced the length of the swaying carriage while the train drew closer to Berlin. Just after five p.m. the train reached Berlin's Stettin station. Hitler and his entourage drove almost stealthily to the Reich chancellery. The atmosphere was funereal.

Without doubt his thoughts now revolved around the next step. In January 1944 he was secretly to address his sceptical generals with words that he might well have been thinking now. 'If I am now taken to task about what concrete prospects there are of ending the war, then I should just like to ask you to look at the history of wars and tell me when in the major campaigns any concrete idea emerged as to how each would end. . . . Moltke himself wrote that it is erroneous to expect that any plan of war can be drawn up that will hold good after the first battles.' In the same speech he was to explain: 'In my position one can have no other master than one's own judgement, one's conscience, and one's sense of duty.'

The army had issued an order for the withdrawal of most of the combat divisions from Poland and their partial demobilisation. When Hitler heard of it he declared, 'We are going to attack the West, and we are going to do it this October!'

There are small indications that Hitler had known all along that he was on the threshold of a long and bitter war with Britain. As early as September 5 the Führer instructed Walther Hewel to use every possible diplomatic channel to rescue his disconsolate friend 'Putzi' Hanfstaengl from the con-

sequences of his own self-imposed exile in London and arrange his escape to Germany. Britain was clearly going to play for time. On the evening of September 12, Hitler confidentially disclosed to Colonel Schmundt that as soon as Poland had been defeated he would swing around and *attack* in the west; he must exploit the western weakness while he could. He said the same to Goebbels – 'Once we've dealt with the east,' the minister recorded, 'he wants to take on the West. He has no use for a long war. If there's got to be war, then short and sharp.' On the fourteenth he discussed with his chief engineer, Fritz Todt, the need for a permanent headquarters site in the west. To his adjutants, Hitler explained that his Great War experience in Flanders had taught him that until January the weather would hold good for an offensive, after which it would be imprudent to launch a large-scale campaign before May. He proposed to make one more peace offer to Britain, but he did not seriously expect Britain to come to terms until the Wehrmacht was arrayed on the English Channel, he said.

Hitler revealed this intention to his startled supreme commanders on September 27. What disturbed the army was Hitler's insistence that since German superiority of arms and men was only temporary, the offensive against France must begin before the end of 1939, and, as in 1914, it would have to be carried through Belgium. Hitler explained that he was unconvinced of Belgium's honest neutrality; there were indications that she would permit a rapid invasion by the French and British forces massing on her western frontier. Aware that Brauchitsch inwardly rebelled against this new campaign, Hitler tolerated no discussion of his decision or of the prospects. He terminated the conference by tossing his brief notes into the fire burning in the study grate.

Baron Ernst von Weizsäcker recorded Hitler as saying in his presence two days later that the new offensive might cost Germany a million men – but it would cost the enemy the same number, and the enemy could ill afford the loss. Hitler repeated his arguments to his army and army group commanders when he assembled them in the chancellery the next day.

WARSAW HAD just fallen. Elsewhere in Poland the towns had largely escaped damage. In Kraków, little had been bombed. But this was not the fate of Warsaw. By the twenty-first it was clear that the city would have to be taken by storm. The two hundred foreign diplomats were allowed to escape, and the artillery bombardment of the city was stepped up. On the twenty-fifth Hitler had visited the Tenth and Eighth armies; the latter had a

hundred and fifty batteries of artillery drawn up for the final bombardment due to begin next day. From the roof of a sports stadium Hitler watched with binoculars as the artillery pounded Warsaw. Blaskowitz's report states:

> Hitler was briefed on the Eighth Army's plan of attack: according to this the main artillery assault on the fortress will commence early on September 26. Until then only identified military objectives, enemy batteries, and vital installations such as gas, water, and power stations are being bombarded by ground and air forces. . . .
>
> After the plan of attack has been outlined broadly to him, the Führer, who is deeply troubled by the suffering that lies in store for the population of the fortress [Warsaw], suggests that one more last attempt should be made to persuade the military command of Warsaw to abandon its lunatic course. He guarantees that the officers of the fortress will be granted honourable captivity and may retain their daggers if they surrender forthwith, and orders that the NCOs and troops are to be assured of their early release after the necessary formalities.

Millions of new leaflets publishing these terms were dropped over Warsaw that evening. The Polish commandant made no response. Early on the twenty-sixth, therefore, the target of the artillery bombardment was changed to the city itself, and the infantry assault began. The next day it was all over; the Poles had capitulated with virtually no further military resistance. On October 2, General Rommel visited Warsaw and afterward reported to Hitler on the terrible scenes of destruction. Rommel wrote to his wife the next day: 'Report in the Reich chancellery, and dinner at the Führer's table. Warsaw is in bad shape. There is hardly a building not in some way damaged or with its windows intact. . . . The people must have suffered terribly. For seven days there has been no water, no power, no gas, and no food. . . . The mayor estimates there are forty thousand dead and injured. . . .'

A pall of death still hung over Warsaw as Hitler flew in for his big victory parade there on October 5. The stench of rotting bodies soured the Polish air. According to his closest staff, the Führer was unnerved by the spectacle of the death all about. Outwardly he remained hard and callous. To the foreign journalists swarming around him he said menacingly, 'Take a good look around Warsaw. That is how I can deal with any European city.' But when he saw the banquet that the army had prepared at the airfield, either his stomach rebelled or his instinct for bad publicity warned him not to sit

at a vast, horseshoe-shaped table with spotless white linen and sumptuous food at a time when hundreds of thousands of Warsaw's inhabitants were starving.

The frontiers of eastern Europe had now been agreed upon between Germany and the Soviet Union. Hitler had insisted that his foreign minister personally fly to Moscow to settle the details: 'Laying down the definitive frontiers between Asia and Europe for the next thousand years is after all a task worthy of the foreign minister of the *Grossdeutsches Reich!*' Whereas the line provisionally agreed upon in mid-September had run along the Vistula River, it now followed the Bug River far to the east, since Stalin had also assigned to Germany the districts of Warsaw and Lublin in exchange for the Baltic state of Lithuania, which the August pact had placed within Germany's sphere of influence. So now the German troops who had advanced to the Bug, only to be ordered to withdraw to the Vistula, had to march eastward once again, spanning the difficult terrain for the third time in as many weeks.

FOR THE first two weeks of October 1939, Hitler unquestionably wavered between continuing the fight and making peace with the remaining belligerents on the best terms he could get. The fact that he had ordered the Wehrmacht to get ready for 'Operation Yellow' (*Fall Gelb*, the attack on France and the Low Countries) in no way detracts from the reality of his peace offensive. Germany would have needed at least fifty years to digest the new territories and carry out the enforced settlement programmes planned by Heinrich Himmler to fortify the German blood in the east.

Thus Hitler's peace feelers toward London were sincere – not just a ploy to drive a wedge between Britain and France. Weizsäcker wrote early in October: 'The attempt to wind up the war now is for real. I myself put the chances at twenty percent, [Hitler] at fifty percent; his desire is 100 percent. If he obtained peace . . . it would eliminate the awkward decision as to how to reduce Britain by military means.' Early in September Göring had hinted to the British through Birger Dahlerus that Germany would be willing to restore sovereignty to a Poland shorn of the old German provinces excised from the Fatherland at the end of the Great War; there would also be a reduction in German armaments. The British response had been a cautious readiness to listen to the detailed German proposals. Hitler told Dahlerus in Berlin late on September 26 that if the British still wanted to salvage anything of Poland, they would have to make haste, and now he

could do nothing without consulting his Russian friends. Dahlerus left for London at once.

The German army had good reason to keep anxious track of Hitler's peace offensive. Late in September, Halder's deputy had gloomily – and wholly inaccurately – warned that the German army could not launch a frontal assault on the French before 1942. The tactics which had proved so successful in Poland would not suffice against the well-organised French army; the foggy weather and short hours of autumn daylight would set the Luftwaffe at a disadvantage.

Brauchitsch enumerated these arguments to Hitler on October 7, and Hitler asked the Commander in Chief to leave his notes behind. Over the next two days he dictated a fifty-eight-page memorandum for Keitel and the three commanders in chief alone; in it he explained just why they must launch 'Yellow' at the very earliest opportunity and just why time was working against Germany. The Führer read this formidable document to his uncomfortable generals on the tenth. In it, he insisted that Britain's long-range goal remained unchanged. The long-range German war aim must therefore be the absolute military defeat of the West. This was the struggle which the German people must now assume. Despite all this, he added, a rapidly achieved peace agreement would still serve German interests – provided that Germany was required to relinquish nothing of her gains.

ON SEPTEMBER 29, Alfred Rosenberg secured Hitler's permission to take up feelers put out through an intermediary in Switzerland by officials of the British air ministry; but this glimmer of hope was shortly extinguished when the intermediary reported that the forces for peace in that ministry had been pushed to the wall by the more militant forces at Churchill's beck and call. Little more was heard of these diffident approaches from London.

At this stage in Hitler's thought processes there came an ostensible intervention by President Roosevelt that was as abrupt in its approach as it was enigmatic in denouement. At the beginning of October an influential American oil tycoon, William Rhodes Davis, arrived in Berlin on a peace mission for which he had apparently received a ninety-minute personal briefing from Roosevelt. In Berlin the oilman met Göring, and a seven-page summary of the discussion of the alleged Roosevelt proposals survives. It was evidently given wide confidential circulation in Berlin, for sardonic references to Roosevelt's sudden emergence as an 'angel of peace' bent on securing a third term figure in several diaries of the day.

> President Roosevelt is prepared to put pressure on the western powers to start peace talks. . . . [He] asks to be advised of the various points Germany wants to settle, for example, Poland and the colonies. In this connection President Roosevelt also mentioned the question of the purely Czech areas, on which however a settlement need not come into effect until later. This point was touched on by President Roosevelt with regard to public opinion in the United States, as he must placate the Czech voters and the circles sympathising with them if he is to exercise pressure on Britain to end the war.

Roosevelt suspected that Britain's motives were far more dangerous and that they had nothing to do with Poland; he himself recognised that the real reason for the war lay in the one-sided *Diktat* of Versailles which made it impossible for the German people to acquire a living standard comparable with that of their neighbours in Europe. Roosevelt's proposal, according to the unpublished summary, was that Hitler be allowed to keep Danzig and all the formerly German Polish provinces, and that all Germany's former African colonies be restored to her forthwith. This was not all. If Daladier and Chamberlain refused to comply, then President Roosevelt would support Germany – Davis reported – in her search for a lasting peace: he would supply Germany with goods and war supplies 'convoyed to Germany under the protection of the American armed forces' if need be. John L. Lewis had privately promised Davis that if some such agreement could be reached between Germany and the United States his unions would prevent the manufacture of war supplies for Britain and France.

On October 3 Göring announced to the American emissary that in his important speech to the Reichstag on the sixth Hitler would make a number of peace proposals closely embodying the points Davis had brought from Washington. Göring told Davis: 'If in his [Roosevelt's] opinion the suggestions afford a reasonable basis for a peace conference, he will then have the opportunity to bring about this settlement. . . . You may assure Mr. Roosevelt that if he will undertake this mediation, Germany will agree to an adjustment whereby a new Polish state and an independent Czechoslovak government would come into being.' Göring was willing to attend such a conference in Washington.

Hitler hoped for an interim reply from Roosevelt by the fifth. (As Rosenberg wrote: 'It would be a cruel blow for London to be urgently "advised" by Washington to sue for peace!') But something had gone wrong:

when Davis reached Washington he was not readmitted to the President, and they did not meet again.

A different aspect of Roosevelt's policy was revealed by the Polish documents ransacked by the Nazis from the archives in Warsaw. The dispatches of the Polish ambassadors in Washington and Paris laid bare Roosevelt's efforts to goad France and Britain into war. In November 1938, William C. Bullitt, his personal friend and ambassador in Paris, had indicated to the Poles that the President's desire was that 'Germany and Russia should come to blows,' whereupon the democratic nations would attack Germany and force her into submission; in the spring of 1939, Bullitt quoted Roosevelt as being determined 'not to participate in the war from the start, but to be in at the finish.' Washington, Bullitt had told the Polish diplomats, was being guided solely by the material interests of the United States.

Events now took their course. On Friday, October 6, Hitler spoke to the Reichstag. He singled out Churchill as a representative of the Jewish capitalist and journalistic circles whose sole interest in life lay in the furtherance of arson on an international scale.

Optimistically General Rommel wrote from Berlin on the seventh: 'If the war ends soon, I hope I will soon be able to go home. . . .'

Late on October 9 Dahlerus reported to Hitler the conditions Britain was attaching to peace negotiations: in addition to insisting on a new Polish state, Britain wanted all weapons of aggression destroyed forthwith. These were hard terms to swallow, for Britain was blithely ignoring the growing armed strength of the Soviet Union and her expansionist policies. Nevertheless, on the tenth, Dahlerus was instructed to advise London that Hitler would *accept* these terms on principle. The Swedish negotiator saw Hitler twice that day before he departed for The Hague.

He took with him a formal letter from Göring and a list of Hitler's proposals. Dahlerus noted to one German officer after meeting Hitler that 'Germany for her part was able to swallow even tough conditions, provided they were put in a palatable form.' He said he was taking with him to Holland more than enough to dispel Britain's smouldering mistrust of Hitler. 'It depends on London,' Hitler explained at lunch on October 10 to Dr. Goebbels, 'whether the war goes on.'

In Holland, however, Dahlerus waited in vain for the promised British emissary. Chamberlain's eagerly awaited speech to the House of Commons on October 12 exploded Hitler's confident expectation that peace was about to descend on Europe after five weeks of war. Chamberlain dismissed Hit-

ler's public offer as 'vague and uncertain' – he had made no suggestion for righting the wrongs done to Czechoslovakia and Poland. If Hitler wanted peace, said Chamberlain, 'acts – not words alone – must be forthcoming.' That same evening Hitler sent for Göring, Milch, and Udet of the Luftwaffe and instructed them to resume bomb production at the earliest possible moment: 'The war will go on!'

'Before these answers came,' Weizsäcker wrote two days later, 'the Führer himself had indulged in great hopes of seeing his dream of working with Britain fulfilled. He had set his heart on peace. Herr von Ribbentrop seemed less predisposed toward it. He sent the Führer his own word picture of a future Europe like the empire of Charlemagne.' To the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin Hitler voiced his puzzlement at Britain's intransigence. He felt he had repeatedly extended the hand of peace and friendship to the British and each time they had blacked his eye in reply. 'The survival of the British Empire is in Germany's interests too,' Hitler noted, 'because if Britain loses India, we gain nothing thereby.'

Of course he was going to restore a Polish state – he did not want to gorge himself with Poles; as for the rest of Chamberlain's outbursts, he, Hitler, might as well demand that Britain 'right the wrongs' done to India, Egypt, and Palestine. Britain could have peace any time she wanted, but they – and that included that 'brilliantined moron' Eden and the equally incompetent Churchill – must learn to keep their noses out of Europe.

THE URGENCY of resuming the offensive was what Hitler had most emphasised in his memorandum of October 9. German military advantage was now at its very zenith. In Italy Mussolini was not getting any younger. Russia's attitude could easily change. And there were other reasons why Germany must strike swiftly and avoid a protracted war: as Britain injected fresh units into France, the psychological boost this gave to the French could not be ignored; conversely it would become progressively more difficult to sustain the German public's enthusiasm for war as each month passed. Germany's air superiority was only temporary – the moment the enemy believed *he* had achieved air superiority he would exploit it. Above all, the British and French knew of the vulnerability of the Ruhr industries, and the moment the enemy could base aircraft or even long-range artillery on Belgian and Dutch territory, Germany would have to write off the Ruhr from the war effort. This was why Hitler was convinced that the occupation of Belgium and Holland *must* be on the western powers' agenda already, and this

was how he justified ordering his army to prepare to attack France through Belgium.

If the coast of western Europe were in Hitler's hands, the advantages to Germany would be decisive: for sound strategic reasons the German navy needed submarine bases west of the English Channel. Similarly the Luftwaffe would have a disproportionate advantage in striking power if its flying distance to British targets involved only the short shuttle route from Holland, Belgium, or even the Pas de Calais in France.

These were the reasons Hitler gave for asking the Wehrmacht to put the offensive first, attacking in the west 'this very autumn,' and en masse. The German army would attack the French along a front from south of Luxembourg to north of Nijmegen, in Holland. Splitting into two assault groups on either side of the Belgian fortress of Liège, it would destroy the French and British armies which would have come to meet it.

The German armoured formations would be used with such speed and dexterity that no cohesive front could be stabilised by the enemy. The Luftwaffe was to concentrate on shattering enemy railroad and road networks, rather than squander effort on hunting down individual aircraft. 'Extreme restrictions are to be imposed on air attacks on cities themselves'; they were to be bombed only if necessary as reprisals for raids on the Reich cities.

The German navy and air force accepted Hitler's arguments without demur. The army leadership did not. Perhaps this was because for the first time the generals clearly saw that Hitler took his position as Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht seriously. Admiral Raeder added an urgency of his own when he saw Hitler on the evening of the tenth of October: if Britain was to be defeated, she must be beleaguered and besieged regardless of army objections. 'The earlier we begin, and the more brutally, the earlier we shall see results; the shorter will be the war.'

Hitler thought the same way and stressed the importance of maintaining the submarine construction programme right through 1940. The OKH (War Department) considered the army unready; army group commanders Bock and Leeb echoed this scepticism with different degrees of vehemence, and army commanders like Reichenau and Kluge were equally unenthusiastic about the campaign.

An indirect result of the British snub of his peace overture was a further hardening in Hitler's attitude to the future of Poland. He did not renew his offer to set up a rump Polish state. The Poland of 1939 would be subdi-

vided, dismembered, and repopulated in such a way that it would never again rise to embarrass Germany or the Soviet Union.

A series of radical decrees heralded this new order. On October 4 Hitler amnestied all deeds committed by Germans 'enraged by the atrocities perpetrated by the Poles.' The Hitler decree appointing Himmler gave him the job of 'eliminating the injurious influence of such non-German segments of the population there as are a danger to the Reich'; it was signed on the seventh. On the eighth Hitler signed a decree setting up new Reich Gaue (districts) – 'West Prussia' and 'Posen.' As for the remaining German-occupied area, the Polish reservation, on the twelfth Hitler drafted a decree 'for the restoration . . . of public order' there, subjugating these remaining regions to a German Governor General, a viceroy responsible only to himself.

At a conference at the chancellery on October 17, Hitler announced to Keitel, Frank, and Himmler that the army was to hand over control to the civilian administrations set up under Hans Frank and Gauleiters Albert Forster and Artur Greiser. The army ought to be glad to be rid of this unwholesome task, Hitler noted, and warming to his theme he ordered that in the Generalgouvernement it was no part of the administrators' duty to establish a model province along German lines or to put the country economically back on its feet. Significantly Frank's task in Poland would be to 'lay the foundations for a military build-up in the future' and to prevent the Polish intelligentsia from creating a hard-core opposition leadership. Poland must become so poor that the people would *want* to work in Germany; the Jews and other vermin must be given speedy passage eastward. To an army colonel Keitel frankly admitted: 'The methods to be employed will be irreconcilable with all our existing principles.' According to yet another version, Hitler ended by announcing that he wanted Gauleiters Greiser* and Forster to be able to report to him ten years from now that Posen and West Prussia were pure and Germanic provinces in full bloom, and Hans Frank to be able to report that in the Generalgouvernement – the Polish reservation – the 'Devil's deed' had been done.

* On March 7, 1944 Gauleiter Artur Greiser cabled the Führer that 1,000,000 Germans had been officially transplanted to his Reich gau 'Wartheland' from the old Reich, from the rest of Europe, and most recently from the Black Sea regions; the Jews had all but vanished from the area, and the number of Poles had been reduced from 4,200,000 to 3,500,000 by forced migration.

The population surgery prescribed by the redrawn map of eastern Europe inflicted hardship on Germans too, and German refugees crowded the roads of the territories of south-eastern Poland beyond the San River, an area which had been assigned to Russia. Here there were scores of villages and hamlets where the language and the culture was German, where Germans had tended land given to their ancestors by Maria Theresia and Joseph II – villages with names like Burgthal and Wiesenberg, or Neudorf and Steinfels, where the farms were laid out and worked in an orderly and scientific manner that set them apart from the farms of Polish and Ukrainian neighbours. In the last days of October 1939, Hitler's army adjutant handed to him a Fourteenth Army report on the evacuation of these thousands of ethnic Germans. No orders had been given; none were necessary. 'In the majority of cases the villagers had experienced enough during the Great War (when the Germans were transported to Siberia) and during the years of Bolshevik rule, 1919 and 1920, for them to abandon their property without further ado and take to their heels.' As this westward movement was in progress, a more ominous eastward flow began: from their half of Poland, the Russians began deporting dangerous intellectuals and the officer classes; and in the German half the Jews were being rounded up, confined, and spilled over the demarcation line into the Russian zone where possible.

Hitler's attitude toward the Kremlin at this time revealed a fascinating conflict between his short-term desire for a stable eastern front and an assured supply of raw materials, and his long-term, immutable hatred and mistrust of communism. In private conferences both the Führer and Ribbentrop spoke reverently of the treaties signed with Moscow. But contacts between the German and Soviet armies along the demarcation line were prohibited by Berlin. In his long October memorandum to his supreme commanders Hitler had warned: 'Through no agreement can the lasting neutrality of Russia be guaranteed with certainty.' This latent mistrust was voiced by Hitler to Keitel on the seventeenth: Poland was to be left in decay except insofar as was needed to work up the roads, the rail systems, and the signals networks to turn the area into an important military springboard.

In a long speech behind closed doors to senior Party officials and gauleiters four days later, he promised that once he had forced Britain and France to their knees he would revert his attention to the east. 'Once he had [dealt with the east] as well,' recorded one listener, 'he would set about restoring Germany to how she used to be. . . .' He wanted Belgium; and as

for France, Hitler was now thinking in terms of the ancient frontier of 1540 – when the Habsburg empire of Charles V had embraced Switzerland and a multitude of duchies like Burgundy and Lorraine, extending as far to the west as the Meuse River.

Reich minister Darré also noted Hitler's remarks to the gauleiters in his private diary: 'In history,' Hitler had declaimed, 'the Victor is always right! Thus, in this war, I shall have only the dictates of my own conscience to follow – that is, of my own God-given people. Ice-cool, I shall resort to actions that will probably violate every valid law of nations. What we need,' he continued, 'is space. And I hope to acquire the space we need in the East.'

A week after this speech to the gauleiters, he assembled two dozen generals and admirals for an investiture at the chancellery. During the banquet that followed he suddenly asked the panzer general, Heinz Guderian, what the army reaction to his Moscow Pact had been. Guderian replied that the army had breathed a sigh of relief. This was evidently not the answer that Hitler wanted. He lapsed into a brooding silence, then changed the subject.



'Ever at your side' – the inscription on the dog tag worn by Hitler's Alsatian, Blondi (AUTHOR'S COLLECTION)

Incidents

By November 1939 Adolf Hitler had faced up to the fact that the war would go on. When Alfred Rosenberg came to him with nebulous reports of fresh peace moves within the British air ministry, the Führer belittled the prospects: while he himself would still favour a German-British rapprochement, he said, London was in the grip of a Jewish-controlled, lunatic minority. Hitler said he failed to see what the British really wanted. 'Even if the British won, the real victors would be the United States, Japan, and Russia.' German propaganda now portrayed the British whom Hitler had unsuccessfully wooed as murderers, liars, and hypocrites. That Britain was continuing the fight was an unpalatable truth Hitler could no longer ignore.

Upon his return from Poland, Hitler had equipped the big Congress Room in his official Berlin residence as a war conference room. In its centre was a large map table. The OKW (Wehrmacht High Command) generals Keitel and Jodl moved into neighbouring rooms vacated by Hitler's adjutants. Jodl's status was still relatively weak. When he ventured an appreciation of the overall strategic situation, Hitler cut him short after the first few sentences. But Hitler's regard for Jodl grew as his contempt for the army's representatives became more explicit. He told Jodl in the middle of October, 'We are going to win this war even if it contradicts a hundred General Staff doctrines – because we've got the better troops, the better equipment, the stronger nerves, and a united, resolute leadership!'

On October 19 the reluctant War Department had at Hitler's behest issued its first hasty directive on 'Yellow.' It envisaged a massive main attack being carried through Belgium by seventy-five divisions. Army Group C, commanded by General von Leeb, would remain on the defensive with sixteen divisions behind the West Wall. Meanwhile, to justify invading neu-

tral Belgium the Intelligence agencies were instructed to compile detailed summaries of instances of Franco-Belgian collusion and to allow their imaginations free rein in doing so.

The military prospects of this OKH plan did not encourage Bock and Rundstedt, who expressed their pessimism in memoranda to the War Department in October. Leeb added a similar study, questioning the propriety of violating Belgian and Dutch neutrality. When Hitler voiced his own fear that if 'Yellow' was not executed forthwith, 'one fine winter's night Britain and France may arrive at the Meuse without a shot being fired,' General von Reichenau stubbornly retorted, 'That would be preferable in my view.'

When Keitel returned from Zossen, Hitler bitterly accused his OKW chief of 'conspiring with the generals' against him. He insisted that in the future Keitel loyally transmit the Führer's will to the War Department. The army put the strength of the French army far too high, in Hitler's view; what perturbed him was the growing British force in France, for he considered each British division was worth three or four French. Other generals pointed out that the winter nights were long and that the combination of long nights and rainy, foggy days would make a war of movement difficult. But Hitler wanted a war in which his armoured and mechanised formations could sweep forward, exploiting the 'inflexibility' of the French and the 'inertia' of the British armies.

The more he pored over the maps the less he liked the War Department's proposed operational plan. In the third week of October he commented acidly to Keitel and Jodl that Halder's plan, with its strong right wing along the coast, was no different from the Schlieffen Plan drafted before World War I: 'You cannot get away with an operation like that twice. I have something very different in mind. I will tell you two about it in the next few days.'

This was the alternative possibility – a vast encirclement of the enemy, spearheaded by the armoured units thrusting eventually up to the coast between the Meuse River and Arras and Amiens. Farther to the north, in Flanders, the tanks would get into terrain difficulties. The idea obsessed him, and at the end of a discussion with the senior 'Yellow' generals at the Reich chancellery on October 25 he put it to the Commander in Chief. Bock, who was also present, wrote in his diary that the Führer

> said in reply to a question from Brauchitsch that from the very outset he has had the following wish and idea: to deliver the main offensive *only*

> *south* of the Meuse . . . so that by our advancing in a roughly westerly and then north-westerly direction the enemy forces already in or pouring into Belgium will be cut off and destroyed.
>
> Brauchitsch and Halder are obviously taken completely by surprise, and a 'lively' debate rages to and fro over this idea.

This was the germ of the campaign plan that was to bring about France's defeat.

It staked everything on one card – namely that the German armies would succeed in breaking through to the Channel coast. But he asked the army to look into his idea, and from a side remark it was clear that he was not averse to postponing 'Yellow' until spring if need be.

IF HITLER invaded Belgium, then the Albert Canal and the nearby fortress of Eben Emael would present serious obstacles to the advance of Reichenau's Sixth Army. The canal had been designed from the outset as a moat, an integral part of the Belgian eastern defences, and it was fortified with bunkers, blockhouses, and walls ramped to steep slopes. Only three bridges crossed the canal, and these had been built with pillboxes and demolition chambers. The Eben Emael fortress had eighteen heavy guns emplaced in casemates and armoured turrets and manned by a thousand Belgian troops living underground in the tunnels and bunkers. Since the whole system was some twenty miles from the Reich frontier, the bridges could be demolished long before German army advance parties could reach them; the Germans would then have to cross the wide Meuse by the two available bridges on the Dutch side at Maastricht, and these had also been prepared for demolition.

This complex problem occupied Hitler as much as the rest of 'Yellow's' problems put together.

In the last week of October he proposed setting up a camouflaged Abwehr battalion under Reichenau's control. Commanded by a Lieutenant Hokke, this battalion would be rigged out in uniforms used by the Dutch frontier police in the Maastricht enclave. As Hitler was to say, 'In wartime, a uniform is always the best camouflage. But one thing is vital – that the leaders of Hokke's shock troops be the spitting image of Dutch police officers as far as language, dress, and behaviour go.' Their job would be to put the detonating cables and charges out of action. Hitler lamented his army generals' inability to come up with ideas like these. 'These generals are too prim and

proper,' he scoffed after one such conference. 'They ought to have read more Karl May!'*

He had a solution for the fortress of Eben Emael as well: some three hundred airborne troops would land within the fortress walls in the darkness before dawn; they were to be equipped with deadly fifty-kilo 'hollow-charge' explosives capable of knocking out the big guns there. At the beginning of November, the Seventh Air Division ordered the immediate activation of an airborne assault unit for the glider operation. The unit was to be ready for action by the twelfth, the provisional D-day.

There was much that could, and did, go wrong. An official of the Munster Abwehr office was detected purchasing large quantities of Dutch police uniforms in the province of Groningen. For several days Dutch newspapers featured cartoons speculating on the manner in which the Nazi invaders would be dressed when they came. One cartoon showed Göring skulking in the uniform of a Dutch streetcar conductor.

WITH THE attack ostensibly just one week away, the German army command was in a high state of nervousness. At noon on November 5, General von Brauchitsch himself secured an audience with the Führer, having himself written out in longhand an answer to Hitler's memorandum of October 9. His main concern was the state of the army in the west.

In the Polish campaign the infantry had shown little verve in attack; Brauchitsch even spoke of 'mutinies' in some units, and he recounted acts of drunken indiscipline at the front and on the railways during the transfer west. On hearing this, Hitler lost his temper and demanded the identities of the units involved. Snatching Brauchitsch's memorandum from his hands, he thundered at the general: 'Not one front-line commander mentioned any lack of attacking spirit to me. But *now* I have to listen to this, after the army has achieved a magnificent victory in Poland!'

He insisted that Brauchitsch furnish him with the reports he had mentioned. Sweeping out of the room, Hitler slammed the door behind him and left Brauchitsch trembling. To Fräulein Schroeder he dictated an aide-mémoire on the ugly scene. He also dictated a document dismissing Brauchitsch, but Keitel talked him out of this. There was no suitable successor for the courtly and pliable Commander in Chief of the German army.

* German author of popular and ingenious American Indian stories.

Two days later Hitler provisionally postponed 'Yellow' by three days, giving the weather as the reason.

THAT EVENING, November 7, 1939, his special train left for Munich. He had to speak to the 'Old Guard' at the Bürgerbräukeller. This Bürgerbräu assembly and the long march through Munich's narrow streets were annual opportunities to an assassin. On November 9, 1938, a Swiss waiter named Maurice Bavaud – a nephew of Hjalmar Schacht, as it turned out – had trained a gun on him during this very march through Munich. Hitler learned of the attempt only when Bavaud was stopped by railway police at Augsburg – as he was attempting to leave Germany – for not having a valid ticket. He confessed to having also stalked Hitler with a gun during his daily walks on the Obersalzberg mountain in October. Bavaud was due to come up for secret trial by the People's Court in December 1, 1939.*

Hitler was supposed to remain in Munich until the ninth; however, on the morning of the eighth his residence was telephoned from Berlin that the army was demanding a fresh decision on the deadline for 'Yellow' in view of the weather, and he sent an adjutant to arrange for his private coaches to be attached to the regular express train that same evening. His adjutant returned with word that it would be cutting things fine if he was to catch this train after his speech. Hitler, therefore, brought forward the beginning of his speech by five minutes, to 8:10 P.M., and ordered Hess to stand in for him during ceremonies scheduled for the next day.

At eight o'clock sharp, the Führer entered the cavernous beer hall, the band stopped playing, and Christian Weber (one of the Party's leading figures in Bavaria) spoke a few brief words of welcome. Hitler stood at a lectern in front of one of the big, wood-panelled pillars. His speech was a tirade against Britain, whose 'true motives' for this new crusade he identified as jealousy and hatred of the new Germany, which had achieved in six years more than Britain had in centuries. Julius Schaub nervously passed him cards on which he had scrawled increasingly urgent admonitions: 'Ten minutes!' then 'Five!' and finally a peremptory 'Stop!' 'Party members, comrades of our National Socialist movement, our German people, and above all our victorious Wehrmacht: *Siegheil!*' Hitler concluded, and stepped into the midst of the Party officials who thronged forward. A harassed Julius Schaub managed to shepherd the Führer out of the hall at twelve minutes past nine.

* He was beheaded.

At the Augsburg station, the first stop after Munich, confused word was passed to Hitler's coach that something had occurred at the Bürgerbräu. At the Nuremberg station, the local police chief, a Dr. Martin, was waiting with more detailed news: just eight minutes after Hitler had left the beer hall a powerful bomb had exploded in the panelled pillar right behind where he had been speaking. There were many dead and injured. Hitler's Luftwaffe aide, Colonel Nicolaus von Below, later wrote: 'The news made a vivid impression on Hitler. He fell very silent, and then described it as a miracle that the bomb had missed him.'* For several days afterward his adjutants Brückner and Wünsche brought to the ruffled Führer telegrams of congratulation from people like Admiral von Horthy, the king and queen of Italy, Benito Mussolini, the still-exiled Kaiser Wilhelm, and Field Marshal von Blomberg. Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands cabled:

> Herr Reich Chancellor, may I send to you my most heartfelt congratulations on your escape from the abominable attempt on your life.

Even as Hitler had been speaking at the Bürgerbräu, a man had been apprehended at Konstanz; George Elser, a thirty-six-year-old Swabian watchmaker, confessed that he had single-handedly designed, built, and installed a time bomb in the pillar. Under Gestapo interrogation a week later the whole story came out – how he had joined the Red Front ten years before but had lost interest in politics, and how he had been angered by the regimentation of labour and religion. The year before, he had resolved to dispose of Adolf Hitler and had begun work on a time bomb controlled by two clock mechanisms. After thirty nights of arduous chiselling at the pillar behind the panelling, he had installed the preset clocks, soundproofed in cork to prevent the ticking from being heard. Elser's simple pride in his craftsmanship was evident from the records of his interrogations. He probably was telling the truth, and there is no doubt that one watchmaker acting alone had nearly accomplished what after years of debate, planning, and self-indulgent conspiracy a battalion of officers and intellectuals were to fail to do five years later.

* Below's account goes on to say that Hitler often excitedly repeated the circumstances that had led to his leaving the Bürgerbräu early (see also Rosenberg's diary, November 11). 'He joked that this time the weather expert had saved his life. Otherwise, commented the Führer, the expert was pushing him into an early grave with his weather forecasts, for the weather outlook was black and likely to continue so.'

In private Hitler assured his staff that one day he would publish the whole story but not yet, as he also wanted to round up those who had pulled the strings. General Rommel wrote on November 9: 'My only hope is that now in the Führer's headquarters too the security precautions will be better organised with everything in one person's hands (mine). Because if anybody is going to take *this* responsibility, he cannot share it with anybody else.' And on the fifteenth, referring to 'Operation Yellow,' Rommel wrote: 'The assassination attempt in Munich has only made [the Führer's] resolution stronger. It is a marvel to witness all this.'

On the day after the Munich explosion Hitler again postponed 'Yellow'; on November 13 he further instructed that the offensive would not begin before the twenty-second. There is some reason to believe that Hitler himself did not intend these deadlines to be serious – that they were designed to keep the army at maximum readiness in case the western powers should themselves suddenly invade the Low Countries. Hitler did not doubt that the West had economic means enough to pressure the Low Countries into 'appealing for help' at a propitious moment. 'Let us not credit the enemy with a lack of logic,' Hitler said later in November. 'If we respect their [the Low Countries'] neutrality, the western powers will just march in during the spring.'

Hitler was also under pressure from Göring and the Luftwaffe's Chief of Staff, Hans Jeschonnek, to occupy the whole of Holland: possession of Holland would be vital for the future air war between Britain and Germany. So the time had come to compromise the Dutch: German 'army officers' supplied by Heydrich appeared on the ninth at Venlo, just inside the Dutch frontier. British agents drove up for a prearranged meeting with them, there was a rapid exchange of gunfire, and they were dragged across the border into Germany together with the driver and another officer, mortally wounded; this latter turned out to be a Dutch Intelligence officer accompanying them. Hitler said this was proof that the ostensibly neutral Dutch were working hand in glove with the British. 'When the time comes I shall use all this to justify my attack,' he told his generals. 'The violation of Belgian and Dutch neutrality is unimportant. Nobody asks about such things after we have won.'

On November 13, General Jodl instructed the War Department that a new Führer Directive was on its way: the army must be prepared to occupy as much of Holland as possible to improve Germany's air defence position.

On November 20 Hitler issued a directive which finally ranked the attack on Holland equal to those on Belgium and France:

> In variation of the earlier directive, all measures planned against *Holland* are authorised to commence simultaneously with the beginning of the general offensive, without special orders to that effect. . . Where no opposition is encountered, the invasion is to be given the character of a peaceful occupation.

In the east, meanwhile, the 'Devil's work' was well in hand. Gruesome reports of massacres began to filter up through army channels. Consciences had to be salved, and the reports were dutifully shuttled about between the adjutants. Thus, soon after the Munich plot, Captain Engel received from Brauchitsch's adjutant a grisly set of eye-witness accounts of executions by the SS at Schwetz. An outspoken medical officer addressed to Hitler in person a report summarising the eye-witness evidence of three of his men:

> Together with about 150 fellow soldiers they witnessed the summary execution of about 20 or 30 Poles at the Jewish cemetery at Schwetz at about 9:30 A.M. on Sunday, October 8. The execution was carried out by a detachment consisting of an SS man, two men in old blue police uniforms, and a man in plain clothes. An SS major was in command. Among those executed were also 5 or 6 *children aged from two to eight years old.*

Whether Engel showed this document and its attached eye-witness accounts to Hitler is uncertain. He returned it to Brauchitsch's adjutant almost immediately with a note: 'The appropriate action to be taken at this end will be discussed orally.'

IN THE Reich chancellery, the large table in the old Cabinet Room was now dominated by a relief map of the Ardennes – the mountainous, difficult region of Belgium and Luxembourg that was twice to be the scene of Hitler's unorthodox military strategy. Many an hour he stood alone in the evenings, tracing the narrow mountain roads and asking himself whether his tanks and mechanised divisions would be able to get through them.

By now he had been provided with the original construction plans of the bridges across the Albert Canal; previously he had only aerial photographs and picture postcards of these important targets. From other sources he

had similar details on the fortress at Eben Emael. A scale model of the fortress had been built, and intensive training of the glider crews had begun under top security conditions. The bridges presented the most intractable problem, the more so since the Dutch had evidently been warned by anti-Nazi agents in Berlin; on November 12 extensive security precautions had suddenly been introduced at the Maastricht bridges.* Hitler discussed the operations with Canaris and Colonel Erwin Lahousen on November 16; he did not believe they would capture the bridges over the Albert Canal by surprise alone, and he began casting around for other means of preventing the bridges' destruction. He ordered a full-scale secret conference on the bridges plan on November 20.

General von Reichenau made it clear that since the invasion of Holland had already been compromised once, he had no faith in the Abwehr's 'Trojan horse' plan. Since the Dutch authorities were now expecting police uniforms to be used, as was shown by the fact that they had issued special armbands to their police, there was little prospect of the Abwehr getting away with it. Hitler replied, 'Then the entire operation as at present planned is pointless!' Canaris did what he could to salvage the plan. Hitler was unconvinced: 'None of the plans is *bound* to succeed.' But after all the other possibilities had been scrutinised – including attacking the bridges with light bombs to destroy the demolition cables, and rushing them with tanks and 88-millimetre guns† – he had to fall back on the Trojan horse. 'There must be some means of getting these bridges into our hands,' he complained. 'We have managed to solve even bigger problems before.'

When the conference ended four hours later, Hitler had provisionally adopted the sequence proposed by Göring: at X-hour proper, fifteen minutes before dawn, the gliders would land silently on the fortress at Eben Emael and the bridge at Canne; five minutes later dive-bombers would attack the other Albert Canal bridges to disrupt the demolition charges; the bombers would be followed five minutes later by the arrival of more glider-borne troops just east of the bridges themselves. At the same time

* Colonel Hans Oster, Canaris's Chief of Staff in the Abwehr, had himself warned the Belgian and Dutch legations that Hitler planned to attack on November 12. The fake-uniforms scheme was not mentioned. Oster had been cashiered from the Reichswehr over a morals scandal in 1934 and immediately conscripted into the Abwehr by Canaris. Both men were hanged as traitors in April 1945.

† 'If it can't be accomplished by trickery,' Hitler said, 'then brute force must do.'

the Abwehr's disguised advanced party would seize the Maastricht bridges; for this they would have to cross the frontier in Dutch uniforms forty-five minutes before X-hour.

The weather was still against 'Yellow.' Every morning, Berlin was in the grip of icy frost and fog, which lifted in the afternoons to let a weak sun filter through.

On November 21 the Führer issued orders for his leading generals and admirals to hear an exposure of his views two days later. To the large audience that packed the Great Hall of the chancellery, Hitler depicted the coming battle as the operation that would finally bring down the curtain on the world war that Germany had been fighting ever since 1914. He recited the many occasions when, aided only by Providence, he had ignored the grim prophecies of others to exploit the brief opportunities that opened to him. He, Adolf Hitler, had now provided the generals with a strategic situation unparalleled since 1871. 'For the first time in history we have only to fight on one front. The other is at present open.' His own indispensability had been forcefully impressed on him by the recent assassination attempt; that there would be other attempts was probable. Thus there was no time to be lost. The defensive strategy his cowardly army generals were calling for was short-sighted; Moltke had clearly shown that only through offensives could wars be decided. Germany's present enemies were weak and unready: here, he illustrated his point by listing in turn the number of French tanks and guns, and British ships.

His speech bristled with concealed barbs against the army generals. (Rommel wrote the next day: '. . . But that seems quite necessary, too, because the more I speak with my comrades the fewer I find with their heart and conviction in what they are doing. It is all very depressing.') While Hitler praised the 'aggressive spirit' of the navy and Luftwaffe, he sneered: 'If our commanders in chief are going to have nervous breakdowns as in 1914, what can we ask of our simple riflemen?' He had been 'deeply wounded' by suggestions that the officers had had to precede their men into battle, with consequently disproportionately high officer losses: 'That is what the officers are there for.' He recalled how in 1914 after months of training the infantry attack on Liège had broken up in panic and disaster. 'I will not hear of complaints that the army is not in shape. . . Give the German soldier proper leadership and I can do anything with him.'

It was not as though Germany had a real choice between armistice and war. 'People will accuse me: war and yet more war! But I regard fighting as

the fate of all the species. Nobody can opt out of the struggle, unless he wants to succumb.'

A few minutes later he said, 'Victory or defeat! And it is not a matter of the future of National Socialist Germany, but of who will dominate Europe in years to come. For this it is *worth* making a supreme effort.'

He believed the present favourable strategic situation would last perhaps six more months, but then the British troops, 'a tenacious enemy,' would vastly strengthen their foothold in France, and 'Yellow' would be a different proposition altogether.

The speech lasted two hours. General von Brauchitsch reappeared in the evening and stiffly informed the Führer that if he had no confidence in him he ought to replace him. Hitler retorted that the general must do his duty like every other soldier; he was not oblivious to 'the spirit of Zossen' prevailing in the army, and he would stamp it out. Zossen was the headquarters of the General Staff and seat of the conservative and conspiratorial elements of the German army.



Himmler confers with Reinhard Heydrich and Gestapo chief Heinrich Müller (right) on the hunt for the Bürgerbräu assassin, November 1939 (KEYSTONE)



Hitler with his henchmen Martin Bormann (left) and Julius Schaub
(WALTHER HEWEL)

Clearing the Decks

Hitler knew that his pact with Stalin was misunderstood. In his speech to the generals he had laid bare his own suspicions. 'Russia is *at present* harmless,' he assured them. Pacts were respected only until they no longer served a purpose. 'Russia,' he added, 'will abide by the pact only as long as she considers it to her advantage.' Stalin had far-reaching goals, and among them were the strengthening of Russia's position in the Baltic – which Germany could only oppose once she was unencumbered in the west – the expansion of Russian influence in the Balkans, and a drive toward the Persian Gulf.

It was the aim of German foreign policy that Russia should be deflected toward the Persian Gulf, as this would bring her into conflict with Britain; but she must be kept out of the Balkans.

Hitler hoped that the present situation between Germany and Russia would prevail for two or three more years, but if Stalin were to die, there might be a rapid and ugly *volte-face* in the Kremlin.

There was clear evidence of a Russian military build-up. Blaskowitz reported from Poland that four military airfields were being built, and two to three hundred Russian bombers had been counted, around Bialystok.

In addition, wrote Blaskowitz, Russian propaganda was making plain that this was nothing less than a war against fascism: 'Germany is said [in the USSR] to be planning an attack on Russia as soon as she is victorious in the west. Therefore Russia must be on guard and exploit Germany's weakness at the right moment.' The general's command had clearly identified Russian espionage and Communist subversive activity behind German lines in Poland.

In short, Hitler must conclude that war with Russia was inevitable – and that victory would go to the side which was ready first.

To strengthen her position in the Baltic, Russia now made demands of Finland. When Finland snubbed the Russians, the Red Army attacked on the last day of November 1939. Hitler had abandoned Finland to Soviet influence in the secret codicil to the August pact with Stalin, and he instructed his foreign missions to adhere to an anti-Finnish line, for the integrity of his brittle pact with Stalin was to be his most powerful weapon in the attack on France. The Führer even agreed to a Russian request for the transfer of fuel and provisions from German steamships to Soviet submarines blockading Finland.

Under the economic treaty signed between the two powers on August 19, Russia was to supply Germany with raw materials; it was also to act as a safe channel to Germany for goods exported by Japan, Manchuria, Afghanistan, Iran, and Romania but subject to British naval blockade. Hitler also needed the oil produced in Russia and Soviet-occupied Poland, and he knew that Stalin could exert pressure to control the supply of Romanian oil to Germany. It thus behoved him to behave like a proverbial friend in need; and throughout the winter he was a friend indeed as he instructed his military and economic authorities to do their utmost to meet the Russian demands.

Russia's list of requirements was not easy to fulfil. The Russians wanted the half-built cruiser *Lützow* and the aircraft carrier *Graf Zeppelin;* they also wanted the blueprints of these and even more up-to-date German warships including the *Bismarck* and the *Tirpitz*. They asked for sets of the heaviest ship's armament, and for the 57,000 blueprints prepared for the new Krupp 406-millimetre triple-turret guns, the fire-control sets, and the ammunition that went with them. The Soviet navy wanted samples of accumulators and periscopes for submarines, they wanted a supply of top-grade German armour-plate for a cruiser to be built in Russia, and they wanted hydroacoustical gear, torpedoes, and mines as well. Hitler told Raeder that his only anxiety in handing over the blueprints of the battleship *Bismarck* to the Russians was that these revealed that the vessel had been planned on a far larger scale than was permitted by the international agreements binding on Germany at the time. Raeder assured him it would take the Russians six years to copy the *Bismarck;* however, he conceded that it would be unfortunate if the blueprints fell into British hands.

HITLER HAD assigned to his navy a largely passive role in the war. He initially forbade his submarines to attack even Anglo-French naval forces.

During the first year of the war, the German navy had on average only a dozen submarines with which to blockade the British Isles. Since the Luftwaffe was given priority in raw materials, the navy's steadily reduced steel allocation further limited its expansion. In one respect, however, Raeder had an advantage over Brauchitsch and Göring: to Hitler the sea was an unwholesome element, an area of uncertainty he did not understand, and he was relieved to trust Grand Admiral Raeder to act as he saw fit. Thus, German destroyers executed bold sorties into the very jaws of the enemy, laying magnetic minefields in the estuaries of the principal British rivers. A U-boat sank the aircraft carrier *Courageous;* another U-boat penetrated Scapa Flow and torpedoed the battleship *Royal Oak.*

In the South Atlantic the *Graf Spee* had now begun raiding enemy convoys, but the Luftwaffe – and Göring particularly – wanted to bring the war closer to Britain's shores: when on November 28, in reprisal for the German mining of the coastal waters, Britain issued an Order-in-Council blockading Germany's export shipments, Göring and Milch hurried to Hitler with proposals for a crushing Luftwaffe offensive against British shipyards, docks, and ports. Hitler turned down the Luftwaffe's idea, but he did issue a new directive specifying that the best way to defeat Britain would be to paralyse her trade. The German navy and the Luftwaffe were to turn to this task as soon as 'Yellow' had been successfully completed. Since Hitler would then control the Channel coast, the Luftwaffe really could attack on the lines Göring had proposed.

In October 1939, Raeder had left Hitler in no doubt as to Germany's grim strategic position should the British occupy Norway: in winter all Germany's iron-ore requirements passed through the ice-free port at Narvik; German merchant ships and warships would no longer be able to traverse the neutral Norwegian waters; the British air force could dominate northern Germany and the Royal Navy would command the Baltic. Though he had realistically advised Hitler that a Norwegian campaign might end in a massacre of the German fleet, Raeder saw no alternative to such a campaign if the strategic dangers inherent in a British occupation of Norway were to be obviated.

Raeder's view took Hitler by surprise. Neither his political nor his naval advisers gave him respite once the Russo-Finnish war broke out. At noon on December 11, Alfred Rosenberg briefed Hitler on a similar idea that had originated with one of his Norwegian contacts, Major Vidkun Quisling.

Rosenberg told Hitler that Quisling's idea was that Germany should invade Norway at the request of a government he would himself set up. Ribbentrop and Weizsäcker warned Hitler against even agreeing to see this Norwegian. Hitler told Rosenberg he was willing to meet Quisling. 'In this conversation,' Rosenberg's office recorded, 'the Führer repeatedly emphasised that what he most preferred politically would be for Norway and, for that matter, all Scandinavia to remain absolutely neutral. He had no intention of enlarging the theatres of war by dragging still more countries into the conflict. If however the other side was planning such an enlargement of the war . . . then he must obviously feel compelled to take steps against the move. In an effort to offset the increasing enemy propaganda activity, the Führer then promised Quisling financial aid for his Pan-Germanic movement.' Quisling said he had two hundred thousand followers, many in key positions in Norway.

Hitler asked the OKW to draft two alternative operations, one following Quisling's suggestions, the other projecting an occupation of Norway by force. Hitler initiated inquiries into Quisling's background and decided *not* to rely on him for any assistance beyond subversive operations: a number of hand-picked Norwegians would undergo secret guerrilla-warfare training in Germany; when Norway was invaded, they were to seize key buildings in Oslo and elsewhere, and thus present the king with a *fait accompli*. No date for the operation was set.

The General Staff continued their open hostility to Hitler. After his unequivocal speech on November 23, General Guderian privately taxed Hitler with his astonishing attitude toward the leaders of an army that had just won such a victory for him in Poland. Hitler retorted that it was the army's Commander in Chief himself who displeased him, adding that there was unfortunately no suitable replacement.

Brauchitsch's chief of Intelligence noted: 'There is as little contact between Br. and the Führer as ever. A changeover is planned.' Hitler suspected the hand of the General Staff against him everywhere. When the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* published a sensational and sloppy article on the 'Great Headquarters,' Hitler was furious at an implicit suggestion that history was being made by the General Staff and not himself.

The Führer was however hard to please, for when at Christmas the *Essener National-Zeitung* ventured a seasonal comparison between Adolf Hitler and the Messiah, Goebbels confidentially informed the entire German press

that the Führer would prefer them to abstain from such comparisons in the future.

In moments of military crisis, Hitler was to display an indecisiveness and lack of precision that was otherwise wholly out of character.

On December 13 the pocket battleship, *Graf Spee*, fell foul of three British cruisers off the coast of neutral Uruguay. It was not until the small hours of the fourteenth that the first details reached the Berlin admiralty. 'I have taken fifteen hits, food stores and galleys destroyed, I am making for Montevideo.' To those familiar with the political stance of Uruguay it was clear the battleship's fighting days were probably over. It would take many days for the damage to be repaired. The government at Montevideo granted only three days. Meanwhile British naval forces began to mass in uncertain strength at the mouth of the Plate River. On the sixteenth, Raeder arrived at the chancellery with the latest cable from the battleship. Captain Hans Langsdorff had signalled:

1. Military situation off Montevideo: apart from cruisers and destroyers [there are also] *Ark Royal* and *Renown*. Tightly blocked at night. No prospect of breakout into open sea or reaching home.
2. Propose emerging as far as neutral waters limit. Should it be possible to fight through to Buenos Aires using remaining ammunition, this will be attempted.
3. In event that breakout would result in certain destruction of *Spee* with no chance of damaging enemy, I request decision whether to scuttle despite inadequate depth of water? Estuary of the Plate? Or internment?

Hitler met Admiral Raeder at the door of his study with a demand that *Graf Spee* must attempt to break through to the open sea; if she must go down, at least she could take some of the enemy with her. He put a hand on the admiral's shoulder. 'Believe me, the fate of this ship and her crew is as painful to me as to you. But this is war, and when the need is there, one must know how to be harsh.' But he followed this firm speech with an inexplicable act. Raeder showed him the admiralty's draft reply to Captain Langsdorff: *Graf Spee* was to stay at Montevideo as long as the authorities would allow; a 'breakout' to Buenos Aires would be 'approved.' 'If scuttling, thoroughly destroy everything first.' This reply was wholly out of

keeping with Hitler's heroic demand; but he said nothing. Hitler eagerly awaited the news of *Graf Spee*'s last battle.

During the seventeenth, the stunning news arrived that the battleship had sailed out of Montevideo, discharged her crew onto a waiting steamer, and then gently settled down onto the shallow bed of the river's estuary. In a savage mood, that evening Hitler pondered the damage Langsdorff had done to Germany's fighting image. At three in the morning he ordered the official announcement altered to read: 'Under these circumstances the Führer ordered Captain Langsdorff to destroy the ship by blowing her up.' Langsdorff had been an officer on Jodl's staff; he had been given the *Graf Spee*, it transpired, as a cure for his chairbound attitudes. But the cure had apparently not worked. He shot himself on reaching Buenos Aires. His supply ship *Altmark*, laden with prisoners plucked from the decks of the battleship's victims, was ordered to return home to Germany.

Hitler left Berlin for a brief respite at the Berghof. Passing through Munich, he paid his annual Christmas visit to his friends and patrons, the Bruckmanns. He chatted about his plans to conquer Britain by using magnetic mines and other fabulous weaponry. In his entry in the Bruckmanns' guest book he wrote: 'In the year of the fight for the creation of the great German-Teutonic Reich!' For three days he toured the western front, joining the Christmas celebrations of Luftwaffe squadrons, anti-aircraft batteries, infantry, and SS regiments. On his return to Berlin, Hitler again postponed 'Yellow,' this time to mid-January; failing a period of cold, clear wintry weather then, the Führer resolved, he would call off 'Yellow' until the spring.

He retreated to the Berghof to await the New Year. The photographs in Eva Braun's albums show that even when the Führer sat faintly smiling at the delight of the offspring of Speer, Goebbels, and Martin Bormann at a Berghof children's party, he still wore the field-grey army tunic, with its solitary Iron Cross, that he had emotionally donned on the day his troops attacked Poland. In one photograph, however, Hitler is shown in sombre evening dress, spooning molten lead into a bowl of water – a New Year's Eve tradition. Some believe that a man's future can be predicted from the contorted shapes the solidifying metal assumes. Hitler's face betrayed a certain lack of confidence in this procedure.

At the Berghof he received a long, angry, and indeed frightened letter from Benito Mussolini. It broke months of silence, and marked the lowest point in Axis relations, which had been soured by Hitler's continued flirting with Moscow. As recently as December 21, Hitler had on the eve of Stalin's

sixtieth birthday cabled him greetings coupled with his best wishes for the Soviet peoples; Stalin had cordially replied. In Mussolini's eyes Hitler was a traitor to the Fascist revolution; he had sacrificed the principles of that revolution to the tactical requirements of one given moment:

> You cannot abandon the antisemitic and anti-Bolshevist banners which you have flown for twenty years [Mussolini admonished him] and for which so many of your comrades died. . . The solution for your *Lebensraum* is in Russia and nowhere else.

In this letter – which Hitler deliberately left unanswered for two more months – Mussolini also proposed that Hitler should take steps to restore some kind of Polish state.

Hitler's policy in Poland had undergone a radical change in the autumn of 1939. Early in October he had indicated to Governor General Frank that the Generalgouvernement was to be a kind of Polish reservation, but in November he bluntly told Frank: 'We are going to keep the Generalgouvernement. We will never give it back.'

Hitler saw no great urgency about the matter and had himself told Himmler in the autumn of 1939: 'I don't want these eastern gauleiters in a frantic race to be the first to report to me after two or three years, "Mein Führer, my gau is fully Germanised." I want the population to be racially flawless, and I'll be quite satisfied if a gauleiter can report that in ten years.' Himmler, however, wanted greater urgency. Acting on a cruel directive which he had issued at the end of October, the two gauleiters concerned – Forster and Greiser – and SS generals Krüger and Odilo Globocnik, police commanders based in Kraków and Lublin, respectively, began the ruthless midwinter expulsion from their domains of the 550,000 Jews and the principal anti-German and intellectual elements; they used Frank's Generalgouvernement as a dumping ground.

In some respects Hitler did act as a brake. From Himmler's scrawled notes we know that he was obliged to report to Hitler in person on the 'shooting of 380 Jews at Ostro' on November 19; and that when at the end of November the archbishop and suffragan bishop of Lublin were condemned to death along with thirteen priests for the possession of firearms and subversive literature, Hitler ordered their reprieve and deportation to Germany instead. Events in Poland still disturbed the army. A ripple of protest disturbed the German armies poised in the west to unleash 'Yellow.' Hitler

learned that on January 22 Major General Friedrich Mieth, Chief of Staff of the First Army, had told his assembled officers about atrocities in Poland: 'The SS has carried out mass executions without proper trials. There have been disturbances.' Mieth was dismissed. Soon after, the army's Commander in Chief East, General Johannes Blaskowitz, sent to Berlin a formal list of specific SS atrocities in Poland – including murder and looting: 'The view that the Polish people can be intimidated and kept down by terrorism will definitely be proven wrong,' he warned, and added: 'They are far too resilient a people for that.' Blaskowitz added that the atrocities would provide the enemy with powerful ammunition throughout the world.

Hitler does appear to have issued orders to Hans Frank for regular prophylactic massacres of the Polish intelligentsia. How else can Frank's confidential remarks at the end of May 1940 to his police authorities in Poland be interpreted? 'The Führer has said to me, "The problem of dealing with and safeguarding German interests in the Generalgouvernement is a matter for the men in charge of the Generalgouvernement and for them alone." And he used these words: "The ruling class that we have already unearthed in Poland is to be exterminated. We must keep close watch on whatever grows up in its place, and dispose of that too after a suitable time has elapsed."' And Frank hastened to recommend to his minions: 'There's no need for us to cart off all these elements to concentration camps in the Reich first. That'll just result in a lot of bother and unnecessary correspondence with next-of-kin. No – we'll liquidate this business here, on the spot.'

The directive issued by the Eighteenth Army, on its transfer to Poland in August 1940, is an eloquent statement of the army's surrender to the Party: 'For centuries an ethnological struggle has raged along our eastern frontier. To put an end to it once and for all has called for a short, sharp solution. Specific Party and government agencies have been put in charge of waging this ethnological war in the east. This is why our soldiers must keep their noses out of what these units are doing.'

In the east, Hitler too turned a blind eye on the excesses. An army major procured the arrest of eight Polish whores and put four of them clumsily to death in prison that evening. Hitler commuted the major's death sentence to a prison term. In another case, one of the innumerable young SA officers appointed magistrate in Poland shot fifty-five Polish prisoners in a drunken orgy. Here too the local gauleiter, Greiser, begged the ministry of justice not to blight the young officer's promising career, and Hitler granted him a reprieve.

Within Germany itself, Himmler's police agencies were now acting as a law unto themselves. At the end of September 1939, the minister of justice submitted to Hitler a file on summary executions of Germans; Hitler replied that he had not given Himmler any *general* instruction but that he had ordered certain executions himself. 'This is why he has now ordered the Teltow bank robbers to be put before a firing squad,' his staff explained. But the files also show that Hitler drew much of his information on civilian crime from casual references in the newspapers. A thoughtless editor had only to headline a story 'MAN SWINDLED SOLDIERS' WIVES' for the Führer to send Schaub scurrying to a telephone with instructions that the Führer had ordered the man shot.

HITLER'S ATTITUDE to the Party's own courts was even more ambivalent, as his reaction to the trial of Julius Streicher showed. Streicher's enemies were legion, but Hitler still saw in him an idealist and true revolutionary. Four days after Hitler's secret speech to the gauleiters in October, Streicher had revealed Hitler's military plans to local Party members in a speech, and he had repeated this imprudent step in a larger assembly a few days later. Speaking of Hitler's decision to invade neutral Belgium, Streicher had explained, 'We need the coast for our attack on Britain.' His recent speeches had included blasphemous attacks on the clergy, libellous references to the generals of the Great War, and an address to a young female audience in November in which he exhorted them to find nothing improper in the desire to seduce married men. 'Any woman or lady who gets worked up about this is in my eyes just a pig.'

The Party's Supreme Court – six gauleiters and three Party judges – met in February 1940, and on the sixteenth they ruled against Streicher. Hitler suspended him from office and forbade him to make further public speeches; but he was not ejected from the Party, as Hess had demanded, and he was allowed to continue publishing his newspapers – including the despicable *Stürmer*. Characteristically, Hitler was unhappy with even this mild verdict; he told other Party leaders like Ley that he felt an injustice had been done to Streicher: the legalists, he said, had paid too little attention to Streicher's Party record.



Heinrich Knirr's heroic painting of Hitler, 1938 (AUTHOR'S COLLECTION)

'We Must Destroy Them Too!'

An icy winter descended on Germany. The canals froze, the railways were clogged with military movements, population and industry alike were starved for coal and the most elementary daily requisites. Day and night Hitler talked and dreamed of 'Yellow.' By Christmas 1939 he had already decided where the big hole was to be punched through the French defences: at Sedan; and it was indeed at Sedan that the foundations of the Nazi triumph over France were laid.

It was now January 1940, and the Führer was back at his chancellery in Berlin. The frightened letter Mussolini had written proved how little Hitler could rely on Italy. It was indeed a curious alliance, for the *Forschungsamt* now intercepted a coded telegram in which the Belgian ambassador in Rome reported to his foreign ministry in Brussels that Count Ciano had betrayed to him Germany's firm intention of attacking Belgium and had revealed the date currently set for that adventure. 'The Italians are strange people,' wrote Weizsäcker. 'Loyal glances toward us, so as to share in any success we may achieve. And gifts and minor acts of treachery for the West, so as to keep in their good books too.'

Not surprisingly, Belgium had shifted her main defensive effort to her frontier with Germany. A secret report submitted by German army Intelligence in January 1940 revealed that since mid-October, over two-thirds of all Belgium's forces were massed in the east. 'With the exception of one division, every single mechanised infantry, armoured, and cavalry division is standing on the Belgian frontier.' The Belgian gendarmerie had received instructions to speed any French invasion of the country; and while signposts in western Belgium had been replenished and improved to that end, those in the east had been wholly removed to hamper a German invasion. Mayors of Ardennes villages were ordered to prepare billets for French

troops. Mufti-dressed French soldiers were observed on the Belgian transport systems. The fortifications at Liège and on the Albert Canal were far beyond the Belgian military capacity to defend – they had clearly been designed to accommodate French and British troops as well. British bombers regularly trampled through Belgian air space. In short, Hitler saw no reason to have compunctions about attacking this 'little neutral.'

He still frowned on the notion that he had unleashed a World War. For more general consumption, he decided that the best overall title was the 'Great German War of Liberation.' On January 10 he discussed 'Operation Yellow' with his Commanders in Chief. The weather report was excellent: he decided 'Yellow' would begin on the seventeenth. As January 10 ended, Germany was closer to launching 'Yellow' than ever before. Two million men waited, confronting the armies of France, Belgium, and Holland.

Shortly before noon the next day, however, infuriating news reached the chancellery. A Luftwaffe major had strayed in a light aircraft across the Belgian frontier. Hitler stormed into Jodl's room and demanded a complete list of all the documents the major had been carrying. 'It is things like this that can lose us the war!' he exclaimed – an outburst of startling frankness when spoken by the Führer. Even now Hitler did not waver on his decision to launch 'Yellow' on the seventeenth; at 3:15 P.M. he confirmed this. One Belgian newspaper reported that the German major had hurled the documents into a stove in the room where he was being interrogated; but a Belgian officer had thrust his hand into the stove and retrieved the smouldering fragments. On January 12, the attaché in Brussels cabled that the major and his pilot had assured him they had burned all the papers apart from an unimportant residue, and he repeated this in person to Hitler at the chancellery at eleven A.M. on the thirteenth. The incident was not enough to deter Hitler from launching 'Yellow.' But shortly afterward a bad weather report unsettled him, and at about one o'clock that afternoon he ordered all movements stopped. 'Yellow' was provisionally postponed by three days.

The weather picture worsened. Hitler told his staff, 'If we cannot count on at least eight days of fine and clear weather, then we will call it off until the spring.' And on the afternoon of the sixteenth he directed that the whole offensive was to be dismantled until then; Hitler left Göring in no uncertainty about his anger at the Luftwaffe's loose security regulations, for two more incidents had occurred. Göring reacted characteristically: he dismissed both General Helmuth Felmy, the major's superior, and Felmy's Chief of Staff; and he then calmly informed Hitler that he had consulted a clairvoy-

ant, who had also reassured him that the most important papers had been destroyed. The Intelligence reports from Belgium gave this the lie. The Belgian General Staff ordered military units in southern Belgium to offer no resistance whatsoever to any French and British troops that might march in. Thanks to the Forschungsamt, Hitler had by now also read the telegram sent by the Belgian military attaché in Berlin, Colonel Goethals, on the evening of January 13, warning that the German invasion was due next day, according to what an '*informateur sincère*' had told him. (Goethals's source was his Dutch colleague, Major G. J. Sas; Sas's source was the German traitor Colonel Hans Oster.) By the morning of the seventeenth, it was clear from the official *démarches* of the Belgian government that the documents had in fact betrayed most of 'Yellow' in its original form.

In a sense Hitler must have been relieved that this *bêtise* had forced a major decision on him. Besides, the enemy would now surely concentrate his best forces in the north. The prospects of an encirclement operation beginning at Sedan and ending at the Channel coast were much enhanced. Everything depended on keeping this, his real intent, concealed from the enemy, and in a series of conferences at the end of January 1940 Hitler impressed this on his army commanders. As he said on the twentieth, he was convinced that Germany would win the war, 'But we are bound to lose it if we cannot learn how to keep our mouths shut.' When 'Yellow' began, a foreign ministry official would be sent secretly to The Hague to invite the Dutch monarchy to accept the Wehrmacht's 'armed defence of Dutch neutrality.'* Meanwhile, a constant state of alert was to be maintained in the west on the assumption that 'Yellow' might start at any moment.

AT THE end of January 1940, the Führer had sent his chief military adjutant on a flying tour of the western front. On his return to Berlin on February 1, Colonel Schmundt returned, bursting to report what he had found at General von Rundstedt's army group headquarters at Koblenz. Rundstedt's former Chief of Staff, General Erich von Manstein, was as adamantly opposed to the current War Department (OKH) offensive plan in the west as was Hitler; moreover, he was advocating a radical alternative almost identi-

* Major Werner Kiewitz, who had carried Hitler's first surrender ultimatum to Warsaw on September 16 (see page 232), was selected for this mission. In the event, the Dutch refused to issue an entry visa to him; a desperate plan to parachute him into The Hague was abandoned, as by that time the queen had escaped to England.

cal to what Hitler had been debating with his closest staff ever since October. This convinced Hitler of its soundness; and that the OKH bureaucrats had removed Manstein from his post with Rundstedt and given him command of a corps in the rear impressed him even more.

On February 13, Hitler told Jodl of his decision to commit the mass of his armour to the breakthrough at Sedan, where the enemy would now least expect it. Jodl urged caution: The Gods of War might yet catch them napping there, for the French might launch a powerful flank attack. But now Hitler was deaf to criticism. On the seventeenth he buttonholed Manstein in person when the general attended a chancellery dinner party for the new corps commanders. Manstein assured him that the new plan was the only means by which to obtain a total victory on land.

The next day Hitler sent for General von Brauchitsch and his Chief of Staff and dictated the new operational plan to them. On February 24, the War Department issued the new directive for 'Yellow.' The subsequent outstanding success of the new strategy convinced Hitler of his own military genius. Henceforth he readily mistook his astounding intuitive grasp for the sound, logical planning ability of a real warlord. His reluctance to heed his professional advisers was ever after magnified.

To undermine the French soldiers' morale Hitler ordered German propaganda to hint that the real quarrel was with the British. But Hitler's true attitude toward Britain was a maudlin, unrequited affection that caused him to pull his punches throughout 1940. As Halder explained Hitler's programme to the chief of army Intelligence late in January: 'The Führer wants to . . . defeat France, then a grand gesture to Britain. He recognises the need for the empire.'

During lunch at the chancellery in these weeks of early 1940, Rudolf Hess once inquired, 'Mein Führer, are your views about the British still the same?' Hitler gloomily sighed, 'If only the British knew how *little* I ask of them!' How he liked to leaf through the Society pages of *The Tatler*, studying the British aristocracy in their natural habitat! Once he was overheard to say, 'Those are valuable specimens – those are the ones I am going to make peace with.' The chancellery dinner attended by Manstein and the other corps commanders fell on the day after the *Altmark* incident, in which the Royal Navy had violated Norwegian neutral waters under circumstances to be explained below. Hitler expounded loudly on the inherent properness of such actions – whatever the international lawyers might subsequently proclaim. History, he once more explained, judged only between success

and failure; that was all that really counted – nobody asked the victor whether he was in the right or wrong.

Since the action off the Uruguayan coast, the supply ship *Altmark* had lain low, her holds packed with three hundred British seamen captured from *Graf Spee's* victims. Until mid-February 1940, the worried German admiralty had heard no sound from her, but on the fourteenth she signalled that she was about to enter northern Norwegian waters. Under the Hague Rules she was entitled to passage through them, for she was not a man-of-war but a naval auxiliary flying the flag of the German merchant marine. The Norwegian picket boats interrogated her and undertook to escort her, but in Berlin late on the sixteenth the admiralty began intercepting British naval signals which left no doubt but that an attempt was afoot to capture the *Altmark* even if it meant violating Norwegian neutral waters.

By six A.M. next morning a radio signal of the British commander to the admiralty in London had been decoded in Berlin: the British destroyer *Cossack* had been alongside the *Altmark*, and he and his group were returning to Rosyth. At midday a full report was in Hitler's hands, telephoned through by the legation in Oslo. Seeing the British force – a cruiser and six destroyers – closing in, the *Altmark's* captain had sought refuge in Jøssing Fjord. Two Norwegian vessels had held the British ships at bay until dusk, when the *Cossack* had forced her way past them and ordered the German ship to heave to. The *Altmark*'s report described how a boarding party had seized the ship's bridge 'and began firing blindly like maniacs into the German crew, who of course did not have a gun between them.'

The three hundred prisoners were liberated, the ship and its crew were looted. London had signalled the captain that the destroyers were to open fire on the Norwegian patrol boats if the latter resisted the British approach. The German naval staff war diary concluded: 'From the orders of the admiralty . . . it is clear beyond peradventure that the operation against the supply vessel *Altmark* was . . . planned with the deliberate object of capturing the *Altmark* by whatever means available, or of releasing the prisoners, if necessary by violating Norway's territorial waters.' Hitler thoughtfully ordered that, in the ensuing operation to recover the damaged *Altmark*, Norway's neutrality was to be respected to the utmost.

More than the strategic need to occupy the Norwegian coast before the Allies could do so, there began to weigh with Hitler the belated consideration that since the Scandinavian peoples were also of Germanic stock they naturally belonged within the German fold. It is important to recall that in

none of his secret speeches to his generals had Hitler adumbrated the occupation of Scandinavia. Only after Quisling's visits had the Führer ordered Jodl's staff to study such a possibility. The OKW study recommended that a special working staff under a Luftwaffe general should devise a suitable operational plan; under the code name 'Oyster,' this staff began work under General Erhard Milch a week later.

Almost immediately however Hitler ordered the unit dissolved. He was not convinced that the Luftwaffe knew how to safeguard the secrecy of such planning. Instead, a top-secret unit was established under Hitler's personal supervision; its senior officer was a navy captain, Theodor Krancke. He proposed simultaneous amphibious landings at seven Norwegian ports – Oslo, Kristiansand, Arendal, Stavanger, Bergen, Trondheim, and Narvik – the troops being carried northward by a fleet of fast warships; paratroops of the Seventh Air Division would support the invasion. Diplomatic pressure on the Oslo government would do the rest.

CHARACTERISTICALLY, HITLER consulted neither Brauchitsch nor Göring at this stage. Piqued by this, Göring refused to attach a Luftwaffe officer to Krancke's staff. Hitler meanwhile put the campaign preparations in the hands of an infantry general, Nikolaus von Falkenhorst. Falkenhorst accepted the mission with alacrity and returned to the chancellery on the twenty-ninth with a complete operational plan which now embraced Denmark as well.

On March 1, Hitler signed the directive, 'Weserübung'. The army at once protested at this introduction of a new theatre. Göring stormed into the chancellery and refused to subordinate his squadrons to Falkenhorst's command. Only the navy committed itself body and soul to the campaign.

Hitler wanted the campaign launched *soon*, before the British and French could beat him to it. Hewel brought him telegram after telegram from Helsinki, Trondheim, and Oslo hinting at the Allied preparations to land in Scandinavia on the pretext of helping Finland, which had in the meantime been attacked by the Soviet Union. Hitler orally ordered the service commands to speed up their planning. Göring was still discontented, and when Falkenhorst reported progress on March 5, he expressed loud contempt for all the army's joint planning work so far. The risk of an Allied intervention in Scandinavia was too great. Through Rosenberg, Hitler received from Quisling's men in Oslo urgent proof that the British and French invasion plans were far advanced. At lunch on the sixth, Hitler leaned over to Rosenberg and said, 'I read your note. Things are looking bad.'

The crisis reached its blackest point on March 12. A torrent of dispatches from Moscow and Helsinki revealed that armistice talks had begun. London began frantic attempts to keep the Finnish war alive a few more days.

Winston Churchill flew in person to Paris on the eleventh to inform the French government that his expeditionary force was to sail for Narvik on March 15. At 3:30 P.M. on the twelfth Hitler's Forschungsamt intercepted an urgent telephone call from the Finnish envoy in Paris to his foreign ministry in Helsinki, reporting that Churchill and Daladier had promised him that if the Finns would appeal for help at once, British and French troops would land in Norway. That really put the fat in the fire. Hitler ordered all German invasion plans accelerated, and the forces to stand by for the so-called *Immediate Op.* emergency. By next morning, however, the Russians had signed an armistice with Finland, and this immediate crisis was over.

The German admiralty's intercepts of coded British radio messages clearly indicated to Hitler that the British and French had been on the brink of landing in Norway. The fact that their troop transports were still on extended sailing-alert proved however that the Allies had only postponed their invasion. German invasion preparations returned to a more leisurely pace; for the time being, Hitler withheld the executive order for the operation. 'He is still searching for a sufficient reason,' Jodl wrote in his diary.

WE HAVE seen how Hitler concerned himself however not only with grand strategy but with the most minute interlocking elements of each operation: the position of the demolition charges on canal bridges, the thickness of the concrete in his fortifications, the calibre of the guns commanding the Norwegian fjords. In this he was aided by a phenomenal memory and technical insight into weapons design. On his bedside table lay the latest edition of Weyer's *Taschenbuch der Kriegsflotten*, a naval handbook like Jane's *Fighting Ships*, for the Führer to commit to memory as though he were preparing for some astounding music-hall act.

It was he who first demanded that 75-millimetre long-barrel guns be installed in German tanks, and it was he who pinpointed one common error in German warship design – building the forecastle so low that in heavy seas it tended to cut beneath the waves. On his birthday in 1937, the proud navy had presented him with a model of the *Scharnhorst*; late that evening he had sent for his adjutant Puttkamer, and invited him to crouch and squint along the model's decks with him. He was right, of course, and even at that late stage the forecastle had to be redesigned.

When the Red Book of arms production reached him each month, he would take a scrap of paper and, using a coloured pencil, scribble down a few random figures as he ran his eyes over the columns. He would throw away the paper, but the figures remained indelibly in his memory – column by column, year after year – to confound his more fallible aides with the proof of their own shortcomings. Once, late in 1940, Keitel presented the figures on the total ammunition expended in the recent French campaign; but Hitler responded that in 1916 the German armies had consumed far more 210-millimetre and 150-millimetre ammunition each *month*, and he stated the precise quantities from memory. Afterward Keitel wearily instructed his adjutant to forward those new figures to the OKW's munitions procurement office. 'That is the new programme. If the Führer says it, you can take it that it's right.'

Although the OKW maintained its own munitions procurement office under General Georg Thomas, Keitel readily echoed Hitler's mounting criticism of the arms production effort during the winter. In vain Keitel warned that huge production figures could not be attained if the high quality of modern ammunition was not to be jeopardised. Hitler himself drew up a new production programme in which priority was given to mine production for the naval and Luftwaffe blockade of Britain and to huge monthly outputs of artillery ammunition. Keitel issued the programme to the army ordnance office – headed by a sixty-year-old professor, General Karl Becker.

By mid-January 1940, the latter had objected that Hitler's programme could not be met 'to the remotest extent.' Hitler was already toying with the idea – first put to him by Göring, who lost no opportunity to criticise the army's feeble ordnance office – of appointing a civilian munitions minister to take arms and munitions production out of the hands of the bureaucratic army staff officers. When in February the army ordnance office reported the previous month's production figures, Hitler found this the last straw. Production of the most important weapons had actually declined. In the two main calibres of shell the Führer's programme figures would not be reached even by April.

At the end of February, Göring appointed Dr. Fritz Todt as a special trouble-shooter to locate the bottlenecks in the munitions industry and recommend ways of stepping up production. Todt convinced Hitler that if the industry was given the system of self-responsibility that had functioned so well in the construction of the autobahns and of the West Wall, Hitler's 'impossible' production figures could be achieved. In March, Hitler ap-

pointed Todt his munitions minister. It was as much a rebuff to Keitel as to General Becker, who sensed his disgrace keenly and committed suicide not long after – the first of a sorry band of such German generals whose only common denominator was a failure to come up to Hitler's expectations.

ON MARCH 1, 1940 Hitler had secretly summoned the Party's gauleiters to the chancellery and blamed the weather for their lack of action in the west. He assured them the war would be over in six months – his new weapons would force the enemy to their knees; without doubt he was alluding to the mass minelaying operations the Luftwaffe was shortly to begin, using the magnetic mine against which he believed the Allies had no defence. 'The Führer is a genius,' recorded Goebbels afterwards. 'He's going to build the first Germanic people's empire.'

Italy's uncertain stance continued to trouble Hitler. Roosevelt had sent his under-secretary of state, Sumner Welles, to sound the engaged European capitals on the prospects of peace. Hitler studied the Italian communiqués on Welles's Rome talks and compared them with the Forschungsamt intercepts of the secret Italian dispatches. In his own talks with the American he adhered rigidly to his argument that since this was Britain's war, it was up to Britain to end it. On March 4, Hitler repeated that to a General Motors vice president, James D. Mooney: 'The current war can only be brought to an end by the other countries giving up their war aims,' meaning the annihilation of Germany; Germany, he said, had no war aims.

Britain's heavy-handed dealings with Mussolini reinforced Hitler's Axis position. To force Mussolini to take his trade negotiations with Britain seriously, the British imposed a naval blockade on Italy's coal supplies at the beginning of March. Hitler stepped in with an immediate offer of a million tons of coal a month. He instructed Jodl's staff to provide him with a folder of charts, including one grossly faking Germany's actual military strength (crediting her with 207 divisions instead of her actual 157), and met Mussolini at the Brenner Pass on March 18.

It was their first encounter since Munich. Mussolini arrived with the air of a schoolboy who had not done his homework, as Hitler later put it. The Führer impressed upon him that the Duce could decide the best moment to declare war, but that he, Hitler, would recommend doing so only after the first big German offensive. The Duce promised to lose no time, but admitted that he would prefer 'Yellow' to be delayed for three or four months until Italy was properly prepared. Hitler hugely exaggerated Germany's

prospects: her armies were more powerful than in 1914, she had more ammunition than she could use, production of Junkers 88 aircraft and submarines was surging forward. As for the British, once France had been subdued, Britain would come to terms with Hitler. 'The British are extraordinarily determined in defence,' he said, 'but quite hopeless at attacking, and their leadership is poor.'

Despite all his protestations however Hitler still mistrusted the Italians, for he imparted to Mussolini neither the impressive operational plan that he and Manstein had evolved for victory in the west, nor even the barest hint at his intentions in Scandinavia. In the directive he soon after issued to Keitel, instructing the Wehrmacht to resume staff talks with Italy, he stated explicitly that any Italian forces must be assigned a task as independent from the main German operations as possible, to minimise 'the problems inevitable in a coalition war.'

Hitler attempted in his private talk with Mussolini to convince him that Russia was changed – though how far these words were intended for Soviet consumption is a matter of speculation. He reminded Mussolini that he had always wanted to march side by side with the British. 'But Britain,' he said, 'prefers war.'

There were less abstract reasons for his insistence that German industry deliver the goods to Stalin. So long as their pact was in force, it released sixty high-grade divisions for Hitler to employ in the attack on France.

His innermost intentions, the 'black nugget', lay never far beneath the surface. Perhaps the Russians could have guessed at them, for in 1940 a new reprint of *Mein Kampf* went on sale, in which Chapter 14, with its clear statement of his plan to invade the east, remained unexpunged. In conversation with Mussolini Hitler touched on the enforced evacuation of the German-speaking population from the South Tyrol; he cryptically explained that he planned to resettle these people in a beautiful region 'that I do not yet have but will certainly be procuring'; he must have already been looking ahead to the day when his armies would be standing astride the Crimea.

On March 22, 1940, Adolf Hitler again headed south, flying to the Berghof for the Easter weekend. Captain Engel took the opportunity of this long flight to hand him a report General Guderian had compiled on the training standards of the Soviet troops in Finland.

Hitler returned it with the laconic commentary: *'Auch die müssen wir vernichten!'* – 'We must destroy them too!'

Hors d'Œuvre

On Easter Monday, March 25, 1940, Hitler returned to the chancellery in Berlin. The next time he was to see the Obersalzberg mountain it would be high summer, and he would be master of all northern Europe from North Cape in Norway to the Spanish Pyrenees.

At noon on the day after Hitler's return to Berlin, Admiral Raeder put it to him that although a British invasion of Norway now seemed less imminent than it had two weeks earlier, the Germans would do well to seize the initiative there now. It would be best to occupy Norway on April 7; by the fifteenth the nights would already be too short. Hitler agreed. Raeder also asked Hitler to authorise an immediate resumption of Luftwaffe mine-laying operations, as it seemed that the secret of the magnetic mine was now out; although both Keitel and Göring wanted the minelaying campaign delayed until 'Yellow' began, the Führer directed that it must begin immediately. Against Göring's advice, Hitler also allowed himself to be persuaded by Raeder on another issue: the Führer had originally wanted the dozen destroyers that were to carry troops to Narvik and Trondheim to remain as a source of artillery support and to boost the morale of the troops they had landed; as he put it to Jodl one evening in his map room, he could not tolerate 'the navy promptly scuttling out.' What would the landing troops make of that? But Raeder dug his heels in. The most perilous phase of the whole invasion campaign, he insisted, would be the withdrawal of the warships from northern Norway to the safety of German waters under the nose of the most powerful navy in the world. Raeder was prepared to risk his fleet for Norway, but he would not stand by and see it frittered away.

Intelligence on Britain's intentions in Scandinavia hardened. Far more important was that Hitler now learned of an Allied Supreme War Council decision in London on March 28 to develop a two-stage Scandinavian op-

eration early in April: the cynical Allied master plan was to provoke Hitler into an over-hasty occupation of *southern* Norway by laying mines in Norway's neutral waters; Hitler's move would then 'justify' a full-scale Allied landing at Narvik in the north to seize the railroad to the Swedish ore fields. This first stage would later be coupled with several operations farther south. On March 30 German Intelligence intercepted a Paris diplomat's report on a conversation with Paul Reynaud, France's new premier. Reynaud had assured this unidentified diplomat that in the next few days the Allies would be launching all-important operations in northern Europe. On the same day, Churchill broadcast on the BBC a warning to Norway that the Allies would continue the fight 'wherever it might lead them.' (Churchill's designs on Norway were known to German Intelligence from a series of incautious hints he dropped in a secret press conference with neutral press attachés in London on February 2.) Small wonder that Hitler later referred more than once to the indiscretions committed by Reynaud and Churchill as providing the final urgent stimulus for his own adventure.*

An intercepted Swiss legation report from Stockholm claimed that British *and* German invasions of the Norwegian coast were imminent. After spending two days investigating every detail of the operation with all the commanders involved, Hitler decided that the first assault on Norway's coastline was to take place at 5:15 A.M. on the ninth.

The nervous strain on Hitler would have overwhelmed most men. Perhaps the very idea was too audacious to succeed? When on April 1 he personally addressed the hand-picked commanders, one report noted: 'The Führer describes the operation . . . as one of the "cheekiest operations" in recent military history. But in this he sees the basis for its success.' At two A.M. on April 3, the operation passed the point of no return. The first three transports camouflaged as coal vessels sailed from Germany, bound with the tanker *Kattegat* for Narvik, a thousand miles to the north. Four more 'coal ships' – three for Trondheim and one for Stavanger – were ready in German ports. All carried heavy equipment, artillery, ammunition, and provisions concealed beneath the coal. The initial assault troops would be carried on fast warships, some entering the Norwegian ports under cover of the British flag: ten destroyers would carry two thousand troops to Narvik,

* Ambassador Hewel recorded Hitler's dinner-table reminiscences on July 5, 1941, thus in his diary: '. . . if Churchill and Reynaud had kept a still tongue in their heads, I might well not have tackled Norway.'

escorted by the battleships *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau;* another seventeen hundred troops would be landed at Trondheim by the cruiser *Hipper* and four destroyers. Thousands of assault troops would be landed at five other ports by virtually the rest of the German navy – a fleet of cruisers, torpedo boats, whalers, minesweepers, submarine chasers, tugs, and picket boats. Troop reinforcements would arrive during the day in fifteen merchant ships bound for Oslo, Kristiansand, Bergen, and Stavanger. If anything prematurely befell even one of these ships laden with troops in field-grey, the whole operation would be betrayed.

That afternoon the War Department notified him that the railroad movement of invasion troops from their assembly areas in the heart of Germany to the Baltic dockyards had begun on schedule. From Helsinki came fresh word of an imminent British operation against Narvik; Swedish and Norwegian officers tried to assure Berlin that the Allies were just trying to provoke Germany into an ill-considered preventive campaign, but Hitler remained unconvinced. He already felt that the Swedes knew more than was good for them. Equally ominous were the telephone conversations the Forschungsamt now intercepted between the Danish military attaché and the Danish and Norwegian ministers in Berlin, in which the attaché urgently asked for immediate interviews with them as he had something of 'the utmost political significance' to tell them.*

During the night of April 7, the German fleet operation began. The warships sailed. A further stiffening in the Norwegian attitude to Germany was detected. Norwegian coastal defences were on the alert, lighthouses were extinguished. Norwegian pilots for the 'coal ships' waiting to pass northward through the Leads to Narvik and Trondheim were only slowly forthcoming – was this deliberate Norwegian obstructionism? Soon the entire German invasion fleet was at sea. Hitler was committed to either a catastrophic defeat, with the certain annihilation of his navy, or to a spectacular victory.

Early on April 8, the German legation in Oslo telephoned Berlin with the news that British warships had just begun laying minefields in Norwegian waters. This violation of Norway's neutrality could hardly have been

* Admiral Canaris's Chief of Staff, Colonel Hans Oster, warned the Dutch military attaché Major Sas of this – presumably to restore his own credibility after the many false alarms he had given in the winter. Sas passed the information on to the Danish and Norwegian legations, though neither was greatly impressed by it.

more opportune for Hitler's cause. In Oslo, there was uproar and anger; the redoubled Norwegian determination to defend their neutrality caused Raeder to order his warships to abandon their original intention of entering the Norwegian ports under the British flag.

The elation in Berlin was shattered by a second telephone call from the Oslo legation in the early evening. The *Rio de Janeiro*, a slow-moving merchant ship headed for Bergen with horses and a hundred troops, had been torpedoed a few hours earlier off the Norwegian coast. But Hitler's luck still held. In Berlin the naval staff was confident that the British would wrongly conclude that these warship movements were an attempted breakout into the Atlantic. Raeder had insisted on attaching battleships to the first group, and this was now vindicated, for the British were indeed deceived, and deployed their forces far to the north of the true seat of operations.

Only now did Hitler send for Dr. Goebbels and inform him, during a stroll in the chancellery garden, of what was afoot. The minister ventured to inquire what reaction he anticipated from Washington. 'Material aid from them can't come into play for about eight months,' responded Hitler, 'and manpower not for about a year and a half.'

In the small hours of April 9, Berlin picked up a Norwegian radio signal reporting strange warships entering the Oslo Fjord. Hitler knew that the toughest part of the operation had begun. But shortly before six A.M. German signals from the forces were monitored; they called for U-boats to stand guard over the port entrances. Access to Norway had now been forced. General von Falkenhorst reported at five-thirty: 'Norway and Denmark occupied . . . as instructed.'

Hitler himself drafted the German news-agency report announcing that the Danish government had submitted, grumbling, and almost without a shot having been fired, to German *force majeure*. Grinning from ear to ear, he congratulated Rosenberg: 'Now Quisling can set up his government in Oslo.' In southern Norway the strategically well-placed airfield at Stavanger had been captured by German paratroops, assuring Hitler of immediate air superiority; at Oslo itself five companies of paratroops and airborne infantry landed on Fornebu airfield. A small party of infantry marched with band playing into the Norwegian capital and Oslo fell.

When the gold-embossed supper menu was laid before Hitler that evening, the main course of macaroni, ham, and green salad was appropriately prefaced by *smörrebröd*, a Scandinavian hors d'œuvre (*smørebrød*).

Hitler confided to his adjutants that if his navy were to do naught else in this war, it had justified its existence by winning Norway for Germany. Its losses had been heavy. In the final approach to Oslo along the fifty-mile-long Oslo Fjord, Germany's newest heavy cruiser, the *Blücher*, was disabled by the ancient Krupp guns of a Norwegian coastal battery and finished off by torpedoes with heavy loss of life. Off Bergen the cruiser *Königsberg* was also hit by a coastal battery, and was sunk the next day by British aircraft. South of Kristiansand, the cruiser *Karlsruhe* was sunk by a British submarine. Three more cruisers were damaged and many of the supply vessels sunk. In one incident, however, the cruiser *Hipper* and four destroyers bearing seventeen hundred troops to Trondheim were challenged by the coastal batteries guarding the fjord; the *Hipper's* commander, Captain Heye, signalled ambiguously in English: 'I come on government instructions.' By the time the puzzled gunners opened fire, the ships were already past.

Over lunch that day, April 9, Hitler again began boasting to Dr. Goebbels of a coming new Germanic empire. At Narvik however a real crisis was beginning. Ten destroyers had landed General Eduard Dietl's two thousand German and Austrian mountain troops virtually unopposed, for the local Norwegian commander was a Quisling sympathiser.

Only the tanker *Jan Wellem* arrived punctually from the naval base provided by Stalin at Murmansk; the ten destroyers could refuel only slowly from this one tanker, they could not be ready to return before late on the tenth. Earlier that day however five British destroyers penetrated the fjord; in the ensuing gunplay and the battle fought there three days later, the ageing British battleship *Warspite* and a whole flotilla of destroyers sank all ten German destroyers – though not before they had taken a toll from the British. Thus half of Raeder's total destroyer force had been wiped out. When over the next two days news arrived of British troops landing at Harstad, not far north of Narvik, and at Namsos, to the north of Trondheim, the military crisis brought Hitler to the verge of a nervous breakdown.

HAD THE diplomatic offensive in Oslo been prepared with the same thoroughness as the military invasion, the Norwegian government could have been effectively neutralised. When the *Blücher* sank in Oslo Fjord, the assault party detailed to arrest the Norwegian government had foundered with her. As a result, the king and government had had time to escape the capital, and the local German envoy, Kurt Bräuer, was not equal to the

situation. On April 10, both king and government had been amenable to negotiation, but Bräuer wanted them to recognise Major Quisling's new government and left the talks without awaiting the outcome of his proposals. The king refused, and a confused but still undeclared war between Norway and Germany began. Had Bräuer not insisted on Quisling but dealt with the existing government instead, this situation would not have arisen. On April 14, the foreign ministry flew Theo Habicht to Oslo to make a last attempt to secure agreement with the king. But the British operations in Narvik stiffened the Norwegian resolve. Ribbentrop's representatives scraped together an 'Administrative Council' of leading Oslo citizens but progress was slow and quite the opposite of what Hitler had wanted. He was apoplectic with rage at Bräuer and Habicht for allowing these 'Norwegian lawyers' to dupe them; he had wanted to see Quisling at the head of an ostensibly legal Norwegian government – not some lawyers' junta.

THE MILITARY crisis paralleled the diplomatic one. Neither Luftwaffe nor submarines could carry munitions, or reinforcements to General Dietl in any quantity. With his own two thousand troops now augmented by the two thousand shipless sailors of the destroyer force, he could not hold Narvik once the main British assault on the port began. It worried Hitler that they were mostly Austrians, for he had not yet wanted to place such a burden on the Anschluss. By April 14, he was already talking to Brauchitsch of abandoning Narvik and concentrating all effort on the defence of Trondheim, threatened by the British beachhead at Namsos and Aandalsnes. He planned to expand Trondheim into a strategic German naval base that would make Britain's Singapore seem 'child's play.' Over the next few days, after repeated conferences with Göring, Milch, and Jeschonnek, he ordered the total destruction of Namsos and Aandalsnes, and of any other town or village in which British troops set foot, without regard for the civilian population. He frowned at his adjutants and said, 'I know the British. I came up against them in the Great War. Where they once get a toehold there is no throwing them out again.'

On the fourteenth, he had somehow gained the impression that the British had already landed at Narvik. He knew of no other solution than that Dietl should fight his way southward to Trondheim. Hitler announced Dietl's promotion to lieutenant general and at the same time dictated to Keitel a message ordering Dietl to evacuate Narvik forthwith. The British would now take Narvik unopposed. Jodl wrote in his diary: 'The hysteria is fright-

ful.' Jodl's staff was scandalised by the Führer's lack of comportment in these days. Hitler's message to Dietl was never issued, however.

Jodl's army staff officer, Colonel Bernhard von Lossberg, refused to send out such a message – it was the product of a nervous crisis 'unparalleled since the darkest days of the Battle of the Marne in 1914.' The whole point of the Norwegian campaign had been to safeguard Germany's iron-ore supplies. Was Narvik now to be relinquished to the British without a fight? Jodl quietly advised him that this was the personal desire of the Führer. The colonel craftily persuaded Brauchitsch to sign another message to Dietl, one congratulating him on his promotion and ending: 'I am sure you will defend your position, which is so vital to Germany, to the last man.' Lossberg handed this text to Jodl and tore up Keitel's handwritten Führer Order before their eyes. Thus ended one day of the Narvik crisis.

As each day passed, Jodl's voice was raised with more assurance. Eventually the Allies had landed some twelve thousand British, French, and Polish troops to confront Dietl's lesser force. Jodl remained unimpressed; and when Hitler again began talking of abandoning Narvik, he lost his temper and stalked out of the Cabinet Room, slamming the door behind him with a noise that echoed around the chancellery building. Throughout the seventeenth the argument raged back and forth between them. Hitler had again drafted a radio message ordering Dietl to withdraw.

'We cannot just abandon those troops,' he exclaimed. Jodl retorted in his earthy Bavarian accent, 'Mein Führer, in every war there are times when the Supreme Commander must keep his nerve!' Between each word, he rapped his knuckles on the chart table so loudly that they were white afterward.

Hitler composed himself and replied, 'What would you advise?' That evening Hitler signed a stand-fast order submitted by Jodl; but he made it abundantly clear in a preamble that he thought the whole northern position was bound to be overwhelmed by the Allies eventually. It was not one of his more felicitously worded messages.

His fifty-first birthday passed without noticeable public enthusiasm. When Alfred Rosenberg presented him with a large porcelain bust of Frederick the Great, tears welled up in the Führer's eyes. 'When you see him,' he said, 'you realise how puny are the decisions we have to make compared with those confronting him.'

Göring mentioned during an audience with Hitler that a mass resistance movement in Norway was growing. At the next conference Hitler announced

his intention of transferring executive authority to Falkenhorst; the tough young gauleiter of Essen, Joseph Terboven, would be appointed Reich Commissioner, answerable only to the Führer himself. Keitel – rightly fearing that Norway was now to suffer as Poland was already suffering – raised immediate objections. When Hitler's only reply was to snub the OKW chief, Keitel took a leaf from Jodl's book and stormed out of the conference chamber. On April 21, Terboven and his staff were en route for Oslo, ready to introduce a reign of terror to the Norwegian people.

Again Hitler was plagued by sleepless nights. If the Luftwaffe generals were to be believed, Falkenhorst was in despair and already giving up Trondheim as lost. Hitler sent one officer after another to Norway to report to him on the progress of his two divisions of infantry struggling to bridge the three hundred miles between Oslo and Trondheim.

On April 22, he sent Schmundt by plane to Oslo with Colonel von Lossberg. Lossberg reported back to Hitler the next evening after a hazardous flight. So struck was he by the air of dejection in the chancellery that he apparently forgot himself; when the Führer asked in what strength the British had now landed at Namsos and Aandalsnes, he exclaimed. 'Five thousand men, mein Führer!'

This, to Hitler, was a disaster, but the colonel briskly interrupted him: 'Jawohl, mein Führer, *only* five thousand men. Falkenhorst controls all the key points, so he could finish off the enemy even if they were far stronger. We must rejoice over every Englishman sent to Norway rather than to meet us in the west on the Meuse.' Lossberg was curtly dismissed from the conference chamber, and for weeks afterward he was not allowed into the Führer's presence.

On the chart table, Lossberg had left behind him a small sheaf of recently captured British military documents which he had brought with him from Oslo. A British infantry brigade fighting south of Aandalsnes had been put to flight and important files captured.

The immense political importance of the find sank in overnight: the British brigade commander had previously been briefed on the plan to capture Stavanger – long before the German invasion of Norway. The British orders were dated April 2, 6, and 7. Other British landing operations had been planned at Bergen, Trondheim, and Narvik. The German operation had cut right across the British scheme. 'That is a gift from the gods,' wrote a gleeful Dr. Goebbels. 'We missed disaster by hours. Churchill was wait-

ing for reports of the English invasion – and the accursed Germans had got there first.'

Hitler was overjoyed. He personally mapped out the propaganda campaign to exploit them; until the small hours of the morning, he, Schmundt, and Jodl checked over the White Book the foreign ministry was preparing. The hasty publication contained document facsimiles, translations, and statements of British officers as to the documents' authenticity.

Hitler himself met and talked to the British prisoners brought to Berlin from Norway. One of Halder's staff wrote at this time: 'The first British prisoners were flown to Berlin, shown to the Führer, wined and dined, and driven around Berlin for four hours. They just could not understand how things can look so normal here. Above all they were in perpetual fear of being shot: that's what they had been tricked into believing.' Hearing a few days later that Polish prisoners had attacked the new British arrivals, Hitler asked that the next time photographers should be present to capture the scene of supposed allies at one another's throats.

There was no denying the impact that Ribbentrop's White Book had on world opinion. Well might Hitler ask, Who now dares condemn me if the Allies care so little for small states' neutrality themselves? At all events, on the very day the captured documents were released to the world, April 27, 1940, Hitler secretly announced to his staff the decision to launch 'Yellow' in the first week of May.

In the west, Hitler had marshalled 137 divisions; yet even so he was facing a numerically superior enemy. His Intelligence agencies had pinpointed the position of 100 French divisions and 11 more divisions from the British Expeditionary Force; the Belgians had raised 23 divisions, and the Dutch 13. Added to this total of 147 divisions were 20 more holding the frontier fortifications.

Hitler did not doubt the outcome of the forthcoming passage of arms. Jodl was years later to write: 'Only the Führer could sweep aside the hackneyed military notions of the General Staff and conceive a grand plan in all its elements – a people's inner willingness to fight, the uses of propaganda, and the like. It was this that revealed not the analytic mind of the staff officer or military expert in Hitler, but the grand strategist.' On the eve of the assault on France and the Low Countries, Hitler was to proclaim to his assembled staff, 'Gentlemen: you are about to witness the most famous victory in history!' Few viewed the immediate future as sanguinely as he.

Now the real pressure was on. On April 30, Hitler ordered the entire Wehrmacht to be ready to launch 'Yellow' at twenty-four hours' notice from the fifth. That day, General Jodl had confirmed to him that in Norway the German forces that had set out weeks before from Trondheim and Oslo had now linked; the Führer was delirious with joy. 'That is more than a battle won, it is an entire campaign!' he exclaimed. Before his eyes he could already see the autobahn he would build to Trondheim. The Norwegian people deserved it. How utterly they differed from the Poles! Norwegian doctors and nurses had tended the injured until they dropped with exhaustion; the Polish 'sub-humans' had jabbed their eyes out. Moved by this comparison, on May 9, Hitler was to give his military commander in Norway an order which began as follows:

> The Norwegian soldier spurned all the cowardly and deceitful methods common to the Poles. He fought with open visor and honourably, and he tended our prisoners and injured properly and to the best of his ability. The civilian population acted similarly. Nowhere did they join in the fighting, and they did all they could for the welfare of our casualties.
>
> I have therefore decided in appreciation for this to authorise the liberation of the Norwegian soldiers we took prisoner.

Hitler assembled his staff for a last run of secret conferences on the details of 'Yellow': everybody was now standing by – the glider and parachute troops; the disguised 'Dutch policemen'; the emissary; and two million men.

The Luftwaffe's chief meteorologist sweated blood under the burden of responsibility that he alone now bore. On May 3, Hitler postponed 'Yellow' on his advice by one day, to Monday. On the fourth he again postponed it. On Sunday the fifth the forecast was still uncertain, so 'Yellow' was set down for Wednesday the eighth.

On this deadline Hitler was determined: he ordered a special timetable printed for his headquarters staff as part of the elaborate camouflage of his real intentions. The timetable showed his train departing from a little station near Berlin late on May 7 and arriving next day in Hamburg en route for 'an official visit to Oslo.' On May 7 however the Luftwaffe's meteorologist was adamant that there was still a strong risk of morning fog; so Hitler again postponed 'Yellow' by one day.

On that day too the Forschungsamt showed him two coded telegrams which the Belgian ambassador to the Vatican had just sent to his government: a German citizen who had arrived in Rome on April 29 had warned that Hitler was about to attack Belgium and Holland. The Abwehr was ordered to search out the informant – a supreme irony as the SS was to realise four years later, for the culprit was a minor member of Canaris's Abwehr network.* In any case, the cat had been let out of the bag. Early on the eighth Holland was in a state of siege. Telephone links with foreign countries were cut, the government district of The Hague was cordoned off; and the guard on important bridges was increased. Hitler wanted to wait no longer, but Göring kept his nerve: The weather was improving daily: May 10 would be ideal. Hitler was torn between the counsels of his experts and the whispering voice of his intuition. Against all his instincts he reluctantly agreed to postpone 'Yellow' to May 10, 'but not one day after that.'

Early on the ninth Puttkamer, the duty adjutant, telephoned one of the westernmost corps headquarters, at Aachen; the Chief of Staff there told him there was some mist, but the sun was already breaking through. When the naval adjutant repeated this to Hitler, he announced, 'Good. Then we can begin.' The service commands were informed that the final orders to attack or postpone (code words 'Danzig' and 'Augsburg,' respectively) would be issued by 9:30 P.M. at the latest.

Extraordinary security precautions were taken, even within Hitler's own staff. Martin Bormann was left in the belief that they were to visit Oslo; even Julius Schaub, Hitler's long-time intimate, did not know the truth. During the afternoon Hitler and his staff drove out of Berlin to the railroad station at Finkenkrug, a popular excursion spot. Here Hitler's special train was waiting for them. It left at 4:38 P.M., heading north toward Hamburg;

*This was Dr. Joseph Müller, a Catholic lawyer, who became a post-war Bavarian minister of justice. Colonel Oster also repeated his earlier acts of treachery by giving the Dutch military attaché a running commentary on each postponement of 'Yellow' and the final definitive warning at nine P.M. on the very eve of the offensive. His complicated motives can be summarised thus: recognising Hitler's immense popular support by 1940, Oster desired to inflict on him such a military defeat that a coup against him would stand a better chance; the colonel also desired the Allies to take him seriously as a negotiating partner. Under current German law it is an offence to describe Oster as a traitor; suffice it to say that the Dutch military commander considered him 'a pitiful specimen.'

but after dusk fell, it pulled into the little country station of Hagenow. When it set off again, even the uninitiated could tell it was no longer heading north, but south and west.

Hitler retired early to his sleeping quarters; but the movement of the train and his apprehensions kept him from sleeping. Hour after hour he gazed out of the carriage window, watching for the first telltale signs of fog shrouds forming. An hour before dawn the train glided into a small station from which all the name indications had been removed.

A column of three-axle off-road limousines was awaiting him in the semi-darkness. For half an hour he and his entourage were driven through the little Eiffel villages. He broke the silence only once. Turning to the Luftwaffe adjutant sitting next to Schaub on the jump seats of his car, he asked, 'Has the Luftwaffe taken into account that here in the west the sun rises several minutes later than in Berlin?' Von Below set his mind at rest.

WHEN HIS limousine stopped, Hitler clambered stiffly out. A former anti-aircraft position on the side of a hill had been converted to serve as his field headquarters. The nearest village had been completely evacuated and would serve for his lesser staff. It was already daylight. The air was filled with the sound of birds heralding the arrival of another dawn. From the two main roads on each side of this hill they could hear the heavy rumble of convoys of trucks heading westward. An adjutant pointed wordlessly to his watch: it was 5:35 A.M. Far away they could hear the growing clamour of heavy artillery begin, and from behind them swelled a thunder of aircraft engines as the Luftwaffe fighter and bomber squadrons approached.

Part IV: 'War of Liberation'

RIENZI: *Doch hört ihr der Trompete Ruf*
  in langgehaltnem Klang ertönen,
dann wachet auf, eilet all herbei,
  Freiheit verkünd' ich Romas Söhnen!
Doch würdig, ohne Raserei,
  zeig' jeder, daß er Römer sei!
Willkommen nennet so den Tag,
  er räche euch und eure Schmach!

RICHARD WAGNER'S OPERA *Rienzi*



Hitler discusses fortifications with Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel (left)
and General Franz Halder (WALTER FRENTZ)

The Warlord at the Western Front

On May 10, 1940, the *Völkischer Beobachter* – chief organ of the Nazi Party – rolled off the presses in Berlin, Munich, and Vienna with red banner headlines: 'GERMANY'S DECISIVE STRUGGLE HAS BEGUN!' and 'THE FÜHRER AT THE WESTERN FRONT'. After half an hour's tough arguing, Keitel had persuaded Hitler to allow the OKW communiqué to end with the announcement that he himself had gone to the western front to take command. Hitler was loath to steal his generals' thunder. His prestige was high. General Erwin Rommel – now commanding a panzer division in the west – had written in a letter on April 21: '*Ja*, if we didn't have the Führer! Who knows whether any other German exists with such a genius for military leadership and such a commensurate mastery of political leadership too!'

As a military commander, Adolf Hitler remained an enigma even to his closest associates. Alfred Jodl, perhaps his most able strategic adviser, was to write from a prison cell that he still asked himself whether he had really known the man at whose side he had led such a thorny and self-denying existence. 'I keep making the same mistake: I blame his humble origins. But then I remember how many peasants' sons were blessed by History with the name The Great.' General Zeitzler also grappled with this phenomenon, though more analytically. 'I witnessed Hitler in every conceivable circumstance – in times of fortune and misfortune, of victory and defeat, in good cheer and in angry outburst, during speeches and conferences, surrounded by thousands, by a mere handful, or quite alone, speaking on the telephone, sitting in his bunker, in his car, in his plane; in brief on every conceivable occasion. Even so, I can't claim to have seen into his soul or perceived what he was after.' Zeitzler saw him as an actor, with every word, gesture, and grimace under control, his penetrating stare practised for hours

before some private mirror. He won over newcomers from the first handshake and piercing look, and paradoxically appeared the very embodiment of the strong and fearless leader, of honesty and open heart. He cultivated the impression that he cared deeply for his subordinates' well-being. He would telephone a departing general at midnight: 'Please don't fly. It's such foul weather and I'm worried about your safety.' Or he would look a minor official in the eye and explain, 'Now I'm telling you this privately, and you must keep it strictly under your hat.'

The surviving records are full of examples of the congenial impression Hitler made on others. Rommel proudly wrote on June 3: 'The Führer's visit was fabulous. He greeted me with the words, "Rommel! We were all so worried about you during the attack!"' Milch wrote down Hitler's words to him on April 21, 1941, after a particularly hazardous return flight from North Africa: 'Thank goodness you got back!' In June 1941 Albert Speer's office chronicle noted: 'The Führer sent a telephone message from the Obersalzberg begging Herr Speer to drop the proposed visit to Norway, as things are too uncertain up there and Herr Speer is indispensable to him.' In February 1943 Field Marshal Wolfram von Richthofen wrote in his diary: 'Finally the Führer inquired very anxiously about my health.' In mid-war Hitler would halt urgent conferences with hungry generals for half an hour to allow his stenographers to eat. One wrote in his diary on February 20, 1943: 'At the noon conference the heater promised by the Führer is indeed there – a small china stove. . . In the afternoon, before a brief reception of seven officers hand-picked for special missions for which the Führer briefs them in a short speech, he inquired in General Schmundt's presence whether the stove was warm enough for us. When we said it was, he was hugely pleased and laughed out loud.'

His assessment of character was instant and deadly. A member of Jodl's staff, Captain Ivo-Thilo von Trotha, wrote in 1946: 'My impression was that the Führer clearly recognised the human weaknesses of his colleagues and stood aloof from them.' Once he snatched a document from Keitel's hands and threw it on the floor. Keitel meekly gathered it up. Hitler judged newcomers after only a glance. Of one army commander he sourly commented, 'He looks like a schoolteacher!' – and since for him every teacher was a '*Steisstrommler*,' or buttock-thrasher, that general's career was clearly at an end. Halder was to refer to his unusual intellect and grasp, his imaginativeness and willpower. Jodl wrote that in the French campaign Hitler's leadership was clear, consistent, and capable. Jodl considered that in draft-

ing the terms of the armistice with fallen France, Hitler showed a generosity that gave cause to hope that of the two warring impulses within him it was the better that was gaining ground.

In later campaigns he asserted himself to the other extreme. The classical early Führer Directive, in which his commanders were given a broad mission and left to their own discretion in carrying it out, was increasingly supplemented and supplanted by Führer Orders, in which Hitler intervened in the tactical operations at every level.

Hitler's headquarters for 'Yellow' were at Münstereifel. He found the underground command post here very cramped. Alone in his room, with its folding bed, table, and chair, he could hear every sound made by Keitel and Jodl next door. He preferred to hold his war conferences in the open air. He privately suggested to his staff that when the war was over they should all return each year to Münstereifel, 'my bird paradise.' The site remained unchanged until 1944; it had been intended as a permanent memorial to Hitler's 'War of Liberation.'

As the Luftwaffe had predicted, May 10, 1940, dawned fine. Soon messengers brought him the exhilarating news that the British and French armies had begun pouring into Belgium. In October 1941, his armies now before Moscow, Hitler still remembered the thrill of that moment. 'I could have wept for joy! They'd fallen right into my trap! It was a crafty move on our part to strike toward Liège – we had to make them believe we were remaining faithful to the old Schlieffen Plan. . . How exciting it will be later to go over all those operations once again. Several times during the night I used to go to the operations room to pore over those relief maps.'

The Belgians and Dutch were not unprepared. As one of Jodl's staff noted: 'Our troops were storming an enemy who was ready and waiting for our attack to begin early on May 10.' Ironically it was Canaris's Abwehr that was appointed to find out how the enemy suspicions had been aroused; the Abwehr adroitly diverted suspicion to a senior foreign ministry official.

Extreme anxiety reigned at Hitler's headquarters. One of Jodl's officers was accompanying the first wave of tanks invading Holland and Belgium with a radio truck, instructed to report direct to Hitler on the state of the bridges over the Meuse and the Albert Canal. The Dutch had evidently managed to blow up both bridges across the Meuse north and south of Maastricht. The Abwehr's Special Battalion 100, the 'Trojan horse,' had suffered fearful casualties. But the Belgian bridges across the Albert Canal –

where a hundred troops had silently landed in gliders as dawn broke – were intact, except for one at Canne. By 4:30 p.m., Hitler learned that the 4th Panzer Division had actually forded the Meuse. At Eben Emael a band of intrepid German engineer troops armed with hollow-charge explosives had landed by glider and immobilised the entire fortress: the underground gun crews were sealed in, their artillery was knocked out. By early next morning, May 11, a temporary bridge had been thrown across the Meuse at Maastricht, and an armoured brigade had crossed. Eben Emael capitulated at midday, and with this, Belgium's fate was effectively sealed.

In the north a four-day battle raged as the Dutch tried to wipe out the paratroops and glider-borne infantry landed at Rotterdam and The Hague; bomber squadrons had already taken off to relieve the pressure on the paratroops at Rotterdam on May 14 when word arrived that the Dutch were capitulating. Only half the bombers could be recalled – the rest dropped nearly a hundred tons of bombs on the town; nine hundred people died in the subsequent inferno. The next day Holland formally surrendered.

It was now time for Hitler's masterstroke. His main offensive was to start far to the south, at Sedan, where General von Kleist's armour had just crossed the Meuse. On May 14, Hitler directed that all available panzer and mechanised divisions were to assemble for a rapid push from this bridgehead westward and then north-westward to the English Channel:

> The course of the operations so far shows that the enemy has not perceived the basic idea of our own operation, the eventual breakthrough by Army Group A [Rundstedt]. They are still moving up powerful forces to a line extending from Antwerp to Namur and apparently neglecting the sector confronting Army Group A.

From this moment on, only a resolute commander supported by outstanding military Intelligence could have saved France. General Gerd von Rundstedt is said to have remarked that he would have found it much more interesting to fight the rest of the campaign in the shoes of France's Army Chief of Staff, General Maurice Gamelin.

Again, as in the Norwegian campaign, Hitler's nerve briefly left him. When Brauchitsch made his regular twice-daily telephone call, Hitler bombarded him about minutiae of which the army's thorough preparations had long taken care. As Kleist's armour swept onward toward the Channel coast, on May 17 Hitler intervened to order that they halt to allow the slower

infantry divisions time to catch up. Halder's Intelligence branch, 'Foreign Armies West,' had consistently estimated that half the Anglo-French forces were in the north, waiting to be cut off. Victory euphoria gripped Berlin. Goebbels wrote privately on the nineteenth, 'Since 1938 we have conquered seven European countries.' Hitler however was fearful of overreaching himself; he drove to Rundstedt's headquarters, nervously studied the tactical maps, and on his return to his own headquarters spread a wholly unnecessary gloom about the danger from the south. When Halder and Brauchitsch saw him the next day, he was raging that the army was needlessly running the risk of defeat.

Not until May 20 was this crisis over. The army reported that there were at least twenty enemy divisions trapped north of the Somme; in the evening, when Brauchitsch telephoned Hitler with the news that the tanks had reached the Channel coast, Hitler was ecstatic with praise for the army and its commanders. His health mirrored these euphoric victories. Personal physician Morell wrote on May 26, 'Asked the Führer a few days back if he's got any complaints. He said he feels fine apart from one thing, he still has an appetite that's far too large. He really is getting along famously.' According to Jodl, the Führer spoke of the peace treaty he would now make with France – he would demand the return of all the territories and properties robbed from the German people these last four hundred years, and he would repay the French for the ignominious terms inflicted on Germany in 1918 by conducting the first peace negotiations at the same spot in the forest of Compiègne. Hitler jubilantly predicted that this victory would right the wrongs done by the Peace of Westphalia which had concluded the Thirty Years' War and established France as the dominant power in Europe.

It was this victory psychosis, prematurely sprung upon his military staff, that was to prove his undoing at Dunkirk.

For a while Hitler turned his attention to long-range planning. He was not keen to fight the British empire – not because he feared the outcome, but because he liked the English. While freely defaming Churchill and his ministers as war criminals, he often spoke to his private staff and to Dr. Goebbels, certainly no anglophile himself, of this fondness for the British. 'The Führer's intention,' Goebbels had recorded on April 21, 'is to administer one knockout punch. Even so, he would be ready to make peace today, on condition that Britain stay out of Europe and give us back our colonies. . . He does not want at all to crush Britain or to destroy her empire.'

'They [the British] could have had peace on the most agreeable of terms,' the Führer sighed a few days later to Goebbels. 'Instead they are fighting a war and shattering their empire to the core.' And he added some days after that, on May 7: 'We are neither able nor willing to take over their empire. There are some people whom you can talk sense into only after you've knocked out their front teeth.'

The second phase of the campaign faced him therefore with something of a dilemma. On May 20 he already conferred about this with Brauchitsch and Halder. His earlier eagerness for Italian divisions to join in an offensive on the Upper Rhine front had evaporated. He wrote to Mussolini with word of his latest victories, but Mussolini's replies were an uninspiring amalgam of polite applause and qualified promises of later belligerency. Indeed, an awkward disparity of aims was now emerging: for Italy the main enemy was now Britain, while Hitler hoped and believed that he could oblige Britain to come to terms with him. When Jodl a few days later suggested that an immediate invasion of England be prepared, the Führer roundly rejected the idea without explaining why. We must conclude that he believed that the blockade by submarine and bomber operations would force Britain to submit, for he indicated that after France's defeat he would concentrate on the production of submarines and Junkers 88 bombers.

The ever present Russian threat to Germany was still a distant one. From the slow rate at which airfield construction was progressing in the Russian-occupied border regions, it seemed clear that Germany still had a breathing space during which the Kremlin would continue to appease Hitler. Molotov had expressed Russia's genuine relief that Germany had managed to invade Norway before the Allies had, and he had received word of 'Yellow' with equal sympathy; but this honeymoon would not last any longer than served the Russian purpose. How else is one to interpret the Führer's cryptic remark to Halder on April 24, 1940: 'We have an interest in seeing to it that the [Romanian] oil fields keep supplying us until next spring at the least; after that we shall be freer.' Romania was now exporting over 130,000 tons of oil a month to Germany – nothing must endanger these oil fields.

A Balkan quagmire, Hitler's nightmare! At the end of May the risk became acute as rumours multiplied of Italian plans to attack Yugoslavia; this would free Hungary to attack Romania and Russia would use this as a pretext to invade Romania as well. On May 20 the German military attaché in Moscow quoted to Berlin reliable details of Soviet troop concentrations on

the Romanian frontier. Molotov denied them, but the facts spoke for themselves. Brauchitsch urged Hitler on the twenty-second to do something to curb these Russian ambitions; Hitler responded that he 'hoped' to limit the Russian expansion to Bessarabia. Weizsäcker wrote a curious passage in his private diary on May 23: 'Assuming there *is* a crushing victory in the west, the obvious next move would be to create order in the east as well, that will give breathing space and river frontiers – an order that will endure. Whether Britain submits at once or has to be bombed into her senses, the fact is there will probably have to be one more squaring of accounts in the east. . .'

NOTHING YET indicated that London might already have decided to evacuate northern France. On the contrary, Hitler was convinced that the British would fight to the last round. On May 21 there was a minor crisis when British and French tanks sprang an unexpected attack on the inner flank of the German Fourth Army at Arras. Both Hitler and Rundstedt took this as a warning that the armoured spearhead of Army Group A had advanced too fast, and Rundstedt ordered the Fourth Army and Kleist's armoured group to delay their advance on the Channel ports until the crisis was resolved. Brauchitsch and Halder regretted Rundstedt's overcautious conduct of the operations of Army Group A – bearing up on the Channel ports from the south-west – and without informing Hitler they ordered control of the Fourth Army transferred to General von Bock's Army Group B, which was advancing on the ports from the east. Bock was to command the last act of the encirclement. Hitler learned of this when he visited Rundstedt's headquarters at Charleville the next morning, May 24.

The Fourth Army was ordered for the time being to stay where it was. It was tactically foolhardy, claimed Hitler, to commit tanks in the swampy Flanders lowlands to which the War Department would have sent them.

The previous day the Fourth Army's General Günter Hans von Kluge had himself persuaded Rundstedt it would be better to allow Kleist's armour time to regroup for a more methodical assault on the twenty-fifth. Rundstedt's proposal, stated to Hitler on May 24, went one stage further: his armour should remain where it was and give an appropriate welcome to the enemy forces swept westward by Bock's Army Group B; this pause would give the tanks a valuable respite.

There was a political element too in this controversial decision. Hitler desired to spare Belgium's relatively friendly Flemish population the destruction of property this closing act of 'Yellow' would entail.

At all events, Hitler did not hesitate to lend his authority to Rundstedt's decision to rein in the tanks. At twelve-thirty the Führer's headquarters telephoned the 'halt order': the tanks were to stand fast west of the canal line; there could be no talk of his going soft on the British, because that same day, in a directive giving guidelines for the further campaign against Britain, Hitler merely indicated in passing that the Luftwaffe's present job in the north was to break all resistance of the 'encircled enemy' and prevent any British forces from escaping across the Channel.

Thus the tanks remained 'rooted to the spot,' as Halder bitterly commented in his diary. Hitler refused to set the tanks in motion. One more factor had arisen. On the evening of the twenty-fifth he explained to his adjutants that he particularly wanted the SS elite brigade under Sepp Dietrich to join in this crucial action at Dunkirk. His intention was to show the world that he had troops equal to the best that even such a racially advanced nation as Britain could field against him.

By May 26, Sepp Dietrich's Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler was in position. On that morning, too, Rundstedt's staff changed their attitude, since radio monitoring suggested that their appreciation of enemy intentions was wrong. The British seemed to be pulling out. Halder's Foreign Armies West branch had certainly reported as early as May 21 that the unusual number of troops transports seen in Dunkirk and Boulogne might indicate that British troops were about to be evacuated; and the permanent radio link between the war office in London and the BEF in France, first monitored the next day, also suggested that events were being removed from French control. On May 26 at 1:30 P.M. Hitler told Brauchitsch that the tanks might resume their eastward drive at once. They were to get within artillery range of Dunkirk, and the army's heavy artillery and the Luftwaffe would do the rest.

From the air, the Luftwaffe could see that the British were embarking only their troops, abandoning all their equipment as they fled. The beaches were thick with waiting Englishmen, the roads were choked with truck columns fifteen miles long. Göring boasted of the carnage his bombers were wreaking in Dunkirk harbour. 'Only fishing boats are getting through. Let's hope the Tommies can swim!' The reality, however, was different: the Luftwaffe bombers were largely based on airfields back in Germany, and either their bombs were ineffective against small ships or they exploded harmlessly in the sand dunes; more ominously, the German bombers proved no match for the short-range British fighters. The Germans found that for the first time the enemy had local air superiority, and their troubles were

added to by the fact that at the end of May the Luftwaffe's Eighth Air Corps was grounded by fog for three days.

WHILE THESE momentous events were transpiring in the west, in Germany's new eastern domains a ruthless programme of subjugation and pacification had begun.

On Sunday, May 25, the Reichsführer SS outlined to Hitler and the head of his chancellery, Hans Lammers, proposals for dealing with the various racial strains in Poland. Himmler handed the Führer his six-page plan for screening the population of these new dominions for adults and children of sufficiently pure blood to allow their assimilation into Germany. He proposed that all other children should be taught only the necessary rudiments: 'Simple counting up to five hundred, how to write their names, and lessons on the divine commandment to obey the Germans and be honest, industrious, and well-behaved.' Racially acceptable children could be evacuated to the Reich to receive a proper education. As Himmler pointed out: 'However cruel and tragic each individual case may be, this method is still the mildest and best if we are to reject as ungermanic, impossible, and incompatible with our convictions the Bolshevik method of physically exterminating a race.' After a few years of this racial sifting, he said, a low-grade potpourri of races would remain in the east. 'This population will be available to Germany as a leaderless labour force. . . They themselves will eat and live better than under Polish rule. And, given their own lack of culture, they will be well appointed to work under the strict, forthright, and just leadership of the German nation on its eternal cultural mission.' As for the Jews, Himmler's plan disclosed, 'I hope to effect the complete disappearance of the Jew [from Europe] by means of a mass emigration of all Jews to Africa or some other such colony.' Afterward, Himmler scribbled in his notebook: 'Memorandum on Poland. Führer warmly approves.'

A month later, Himmler took the opportunity of a train journey with Hitler to show him an eight-page plan for settling these eastern provinces with strong German stock. Himmler proposed that young unmarried German soldiers be induced to settle and work the land in the eastern provinces for up to eight years before marrying and taking over a farmstead or estate. The foreign labourers were to be kept in serfdom; attempts at sexual relations with their German overlords would be punishable by death. He afterward noted on the document: 'The Führer said that every point I made was right.'

BY JUNE 2, 1940 the British evacuation of Dunkirk was over. German army Intelligence estimated that half the enemy forces had been swept from the battlefield; Brauchitsch telephoned this information to Hitler that evening. The German army, with 136 divisions, was virtually intact. It would embark on the final defeat of France with a two-to-one superiority. Hitler's blueprint for this operation was largely determined by short-term political factors: Verdun must be captured as rapidly as possible. Overland contact must be made with Spain. Paris itself would be bypassed to the east and west, for Hitler feared nothing more than that an 1871-style Communist uprising in the capital might bring his forces into armed conflict with Soviet-backed Communists. The Maginot line would be taken from the rear. This second phase would begin at five A.M. on June 5.

Meanwhile, surrounded by Party officials and personal bodyguards, Hitler toured the battlefields in northern France and Flanders. Morell, who accompanied him, reported: 'We were on the road for two days. Brussels, the Flanders battlefields (Ypres, Loretto, Vimy Ridge, Bensheim, Courtray, and Lille). As these areas were about the most densely populated on earth you can just imagine the devastation. A big square in Lille, piled high with charred tree trunks and automobiles, was littered with dead horses, burned out tanks, and buildings. On the roads along which the British and French retreated there was a higgledy-piggledy tangle of cast-off clothing, abandoned guns, and broken down tanks, with stragglers streaming back home on both sides of the road, mostly on bicycles, laden with whatever they can carry.'

At Brussels, where Bock had assembled his senior generals, Hitler explained: 'Gentlemen, you will have wondered why I stopped the armoured divisions outside Dunkirk. The fact was I could not afford to waste military effort. I was anxious lest the enemy launch an offensive from the Somme and wipe out the Fourth Army's weak armoured force, perhaps even going so far as Dunkirk. Such a military rebuff,' as he put it, 'might have had intolerable effects in foreign policy. . .'

At Charleville the next day, June 2, he addressed Rundstedt and his generals. He outlined the new operation to them and informed them that Italy would shortly join in. He spoke of the reparations he proposed to exact from France. Once again he extolled Britain and her mission for the White race. It was not, he said, a matter of inconsequence to him which power ruled India. One general wrote in his diary: 'He points out that without a navy the equal of Britain's we could not hold on to her colonies for long. Thus we can easily find a basis for peace agreement with Britain. France on

the other hand must be stamped into the ground; she must pay the bill.' As he left the villa, crowds of cheering soldiers thronged his car. Hitler, every inch the warlord, acknowledged their acclaim. To Hitler the war seemed already won. He said as much to Admiral Canaris on June 3 when the Intelligence chief came to report on the Abwehr agents who had been killed in the campaign so far, and he repeated it to Admiral Raeder the next day.

Hitler's occupation policy in Holland and Belgium was to establish these Germanic states as border dependencies around a mighty German core. As early as November he had drafted a decree on the administration of the countries which were to be occupied in 'Yellow.' In the version he had signed on May 9 he had deleted the words 'There is to be no exploitation of the occupied regions in a selfish German interest.' In Holland as in Norway he appointed a Reich Commissar to fill the vacuum left by the fleeing monarchy; he chose an Austrian, Arthur Seyss-Inquart, evidently on Himmler's recommendation.

Since Belgium had fought honourably and capitulated unconditionally, Hitler was inclined to leniency. He agreed to Göring's heartfelt request that King Leopold be chivalrously treated. A senior statesman, Otto Meissner, was sent to tell the king that if Belgium now acted sensibly his kingdom might yet survive – otherwise Hitler would create a new gau, 'Flanders.' A telegram in German army files indicates that King Leopold was furious at the looting and wilful destruction of his country by the withdrawing French and British troops, so Hitler's political wisdom in ordering his armies to spare the cities of Flanders from unnecessary visitations undoubtedly paid dividends. Here too Hitler appointed a German military governor: General Alexander von Falkenhausen was a liberal commander and maintained liaison with the king. There was in consequence little resistance to the Nazi presence in Belgium. Hitler retrieved for Germany the former German areas of Eupen, Malmédy, and Moresnet which had been annexed by Belgium in 1918; he ordered Brauchitsch to separate the Belgian prisoners of war into Flemings and Walloons – the former, 200,000 men of trusty Germanic stock, were to be released forthwith, while the latter, 150,000 less friendly prisoners, were to be held in continued pawn.

For the second half of the French campaign, Hitler's staff had found a new headquarters site in southern Belgium – in the deserted village of Brûly-de-Pêche in a forest clearing. The whole headquarters, code-named 'Forest Meadow,' was ready with its anti-aircraft batteries and barbed-wire entan-

glements by the time Hitler arrived on June 6. He never felt as secure here as he did at Münstereifel. Perhaps it was the swarms of mosquitoes that rose from the dense undergrowth to plague him; or perhaps it was a general impatience to end the war. Brauchitsch often visited in person. Hitler had mellowed toward him, and seems to have taken him more into his confidence about his future military plans. For a while Hitler abandoned his idea of discarding Brauchitsch – he could hardly do this to the Commander in Chief of a victorious army, as he mentioned to one adjutant.

A member of the headquarters staff wrote of these weeks of waiting for the French collapse: 'Every evening the Führer ate privately with ten or twelve others. . . I remember we all debated the reason why the cuckoo makes a point of laying its eggs in other birds' nests.'

One of Hitler's secretaries wrote on June 13: 'For a week now we have been out front again, in a deserted village. . . Every night we get the same performance: at precisely twenty past twelve, enemy aircraft come and circle over the village. . . If they don't come then, the Chief' – meaning Hitler – 'inquires, "Where's our airman on duty today then!" At any rate every night finds us standing until half past three or four in the morning with the Chief and other members of his staff in the open air watching the nocturnal aerial manoeuvres until the reconnaissance planes vanish with the onset of dawn. The landscape at that hour of the morning reminds me of a painting by Caspar David Friedrich. . .'

On June 10, 1940, Italy formally declared war on Britain and France. Hitler made no attempt to disguise his contempt and forbade staff talks with the Italian forces. A member of Keitel's staff noted: 'The Führer's view is that since Italy left us in the lurch last autumn we are under no obligation to her now.' In the foreign ministry sardonic comparisons were drawn between Mussolini and the traditional circus clown who rolled up the mats after the acrobats completed their performance and demanded that the audience applaud *him;* or again, the Italians were dubbed the 'harvest hands.'

There survives among the papers of Walther Hewel the German government's communiqué announcing Italy's inauspicious action, with eloquent amendments written in Hitler's own hand. Where the original text proclaimed: 'German and Italian soldiers will now march shoulder to shoulder and not rest until Britain and France have been beaten,' Hitler irritably crossed out 'Britain' and then redrafted the latter part to read '. . . *and will fight on until those in power in Britain and France are prepared to respect the rights of our two peoples to exist.*'

at the last meeting of the Supreme War Council held in France, Winston Churchill, the new British prime minister, begged the French to tie down the German forces by defending Paris. His appeal for yet more French blood to be spilled in Britain's cause may have rung cynically in his allies' ears; the French commanders left him in no doubt that for them the war was lost. The next day, June 13, one of Hitler's secretaries wrote: 'I personally cannot believe the war will go on after June. Yesterday there was a War Council in Paris: Weygand declared the battle for Paris lost and suggested a separate peace, in which Pétain supported him; but Reynaud and some other members thundered their protests against him. . .'

The French Cabinet resigned and the aged Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain, veteran and hero of World War I, took over; Pétain desired an armistice and wanted to know the German terms. One of Jodl's staff later wrote: 'When he heard this news Hitler was so delighted that he made a little hop. I had never seen him unbend like that before.' He decided to meet Mussolini to discuss the terms at once. Meanwhile, the Wehrmacht was ordered to take Cherbourg and Brest as a matter of honour, and to occupy the Alsace and particularly Strasbourg as a matter of political geography.

For many days Hitler deliberated on the nature of the armistice itself: he would invite the French to undergo the same indignities as they had visited on the defeated German generals in 1918 at Compiègne; it had been raining in 1918, and the Germans had been kept waiting in the downpour to humiliate them. Then however he softened. Hitler wanted to show the British how magnanimous he could be in victory. At Munich, he persuaded Mussolini to shelve Italian territorial claims until a final peace treaty. Only northern France and the Atlantic coast down to the Spanish frontier would be occupied by the Germans. The rest would remain under Pétain's control. When Admiral Raeder asked him on the twentieth if Germany could claim the fleet, Hitler replied that the German navy had no entitlement to the ships as the French fleet was unbeaten. The armistice therefore formally renounced all claim to the French fleet: the French might retain part to preserve their colonial interests; the rest was to be taken out of commission. Otherwise the ships would be left unmolested – in fact Hitler wished for nothing better than that they might be scuttled by their crews.

At noon on June 21, Hitler drove through the fog-shrouded roads of northern France to the forest of Compiègne. The old wooden dining car in which Marshal Foch had dictated his terms to the Germans on November

11, 1918, had been retrieved from its permanent display at Rethondes and set up in the same spot in the forest. Forty minutes later the French arrived. Hitler sat at the long table in the dining car, while General Keitel read out the preamble. Hitler himself had composed these words: 'After a heroic resistance, France has been vanquished. Therefore Germany does not intend to give the armistice terms or negotiations the character of an abuse of such a gallant enemy.' After this twelve-minute introduction Hitler left while Keitel continued to dictate the terms. The railway coach would afterward be shipped to Berlin as an exhibit; the French memorial at Compiègne was demolished with explosives – only the statue of Marshal Foch himself remained untouched, on Hitler's instructions.

He could now fulfil a lifelong dream to visit Paris and see its architecture. He sent for his three favourite intellectuals – the architects Speer and Giesler and the sculptor Arno Breker – and they arrived at Brûly-de-Pêche that evening, June 22. At four A.M. the next morning they flew secretly to Le Bourget airport. Here at last were the monuments so familiar to him from his encyclopaedias. He was actually *inside* the baroque Opéra, asking the grey-haired usher to show him long-forgotten chambers of whose existence he was aware from the architectural plans. For three hours shortly after dawn he wandered around the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe, and Les Invalides, where he doffed his cap in awe of Napoleon's sarcophagus. When it was light enough he gazed out across the city from the forecourt of Sacré-Cœur and Montmartre. At ten that morning he flew back to Belgium. That evening he commanded Speer to draft a decree for the reconstruction of Berlin – it must outshine everything he had seen in Paris.

An hour after midnight on June 25, 1940, a bugler of the 1st Guards Company took up station at each corner of the Führer's village headquarters. Seated at the bare wooden table in his requisitioned cottage, Hitler waited with Speer, his adjutants, and his secretaries. Throughout Europe millions of radios were tuned in to this quiet forest acre. He ordered the lights in the dining room switched off; and the window opened. A radio turned low whispered a commentary. At 1:35 A.M., the moment prescribed for the armistice to take effect, the buglers sounded the cease-fire.

It was the most moving moment of his life. For four years he had once fought as an anonymous infantryman, and now as Supreme Commander it had been granted to him to lead his people to a unique victory. After a while he broke the silence. 'The burden of responsibility . . .,' he began, but he could not go on, and asked for the lights to be turned on again.

The Big Decision

While a never-ending stream of congratulations reached the chancellery in Berlin – from the exiled Kaiser in Holland, from the crown prince, from Hindenburg's daughter, and even from Hitler's old schoolmaster in Austria – the Führer contentedly toured the Flanders battlefield of the First World War with his old comrades Amann and Schmidt. At one point he darted off and clambered up an overgrown slope, looking for a concrete slab behind which he had once taken cover. His memory had not deceived him, for the same nondescript slab was still there, and for all we know it lies there to this day.

Colonel Schmundt had prepared an interim headquarters, 'Tannenberg,' high up in the Black Forest. Hitler did not want to return to Berlin until he had some unofficial response to the peace feelers he had extended to the British through Sweden. He would then stage a triumphal return to the capital on July 6 and make his formal offer in a Reichstag speech two days later. After that he would be free to attend to Russia in 1941.

Stalin was a national leader of whose strategic capability Hitler was in no doubt; he knew how to think in terms of centuries – he set himself distant goals which he then pursued with a single-mindedness and ruthlessness that the Führer could only admire. As early as June 2, 1940 Hitler had mentioned to Rundstedt at Charleville, 'Now that Britain will presumably be willing to make peace, I shall begin the final settlement of scores with Bolshevism.' He obviously regarded the August 1939 pact with Stalin with increasing cynicism. It was a life insurance policy to which he had steadfastly contributed but which he now felt had served its purpose; his victory in France had given him a feeling of immortality.

There is an abundance of contemporary evidence that Hitler was still well disposed toward the British Empire. The archives of the High Com-

mand and the navy provide ample examples. This was why Keitel rejected a proposal that Britain's food supplies be sabotaged, and on June 3 Hitler explicitly forbade Canaris to introduce bacterial warfare against Britain. On June 17, Jodl's principal assistant confirmed to the naval staff that

> the Führer has anything but the intention of completely destroying the British Empire, as England's downfall would be to the detriment of the White race. Hence the possibility of making peace with Britain after France's defeat and at the latter's expense, on condition that our colonies are returned and Britain renounces her influence in Europe. With regard to an invasion . . . the Führer has *not* so far uttered any such intention, as he is fully aware of the extreme difficulties inherent in such an operation. That is also why the High Command has as yet undertaken *no* studies or preparations. (The Commander in Chief, Luftwaffe, has put certain things in hand, *e.g.*, the activation of a parachute division.)

Together with Göring, Hitler hatched a plan to offer Britain twelve divisions for 'overseas purposes' – the defence of her Empire against aggression. More realistically, Admiral Raeder urged him to launch immediate air raids on the main British naval bases and to prepare a seaborne invasion; Hitler however believed an invasion quite superfluous. 'One way or another,' he said, 'the British will give in.'

On June 25 Christa Schroeder, one of his private secretaries, wrote: 'The Chief plans to speak to the Reichstag shortly. It will probably be his last appeal to Britain. If they don't come around even then, he will proceed without pity. I believe it still hurts him even now to have to tackle the British. It would obviously be far easier for him if they would see reason themselves. If only they knew that the Chief wants nothing more from them than the return of our own former colonies, perhaps they might be more approachable. . .'

On the same day General Hans Jeschonnek, the Chief of Air Staff, refused to participate in the invasion planning by the High Command (OKW) since 'in his [Jeschonnek's] view the Führer has no intention of mounting an invasion.' When the air member of Jodl's staff nonetheless pressed Jeschonnek to help, the general bitingly replied, 'That's the OKW's affair. There won't *be* any invasion, and I have no time to waste on planning one.'

Hitler felt that the British public was being deliberately misled as to his war aims. 'Naturally, it matters a lot what the Britons expect the Führer's

purpose to be in fighting their country,' wrote Walther Hewel to a contact in Switzerland on June 30. 'They were cajoled into this catastrophe by émigrés and liberal-thinking people . . . now it is up to them to find some way out of this mess. The point is, can the British grasp the genius and greatness of the Führer, not only as a benefit to Germany but to the whole of Europe too? Can they swallow their envy and pride enough to see in him not the conqueror but the creator of the new Europe? If they can they will automatically come to the conclusion that the Führer does not want to destroy the Empire, as claimed by the émigrés who are duping them.'

A few days later Baron Ernst von Weizsäcker summed up the situation thus in his diary: 'Perhaps we automatically shy from taking over the immense task of inheriting both Europe and the British Empire. "Conquer Britain – but what then, and what for?" – This question of the Führer's is countered by others, like Herr von Ribbentrop, with a comparison to two great trees that cannot prosper if they grow up close together.'

In Weizsäcker's view Britain would not give in unless clubbed to the ground – and only after Winston Churchill had been disposed of.

DEEP IN the Black Forest, the Führer planned the Reich's new frontiers. Now that victory was his, he saw no reason not to gather the spoils of war. He would throw France back to the frontiers of 1540. He personally instructed the two western gauleiters, Joseph Bürckel and Robert Wagner, to re-annex Alsace and Lorraine by stealth; any formal German announcement that they were doing so might prompt Mussolini to enforce Italy's territorial claims against France, or even provoke Marshal Pétain to transfer his fleet and African colonies to the enemy. Hitler warned his legal experts to 'put as little down on paper as possible,' for the new Germany would have a western frontier not enjoyed since the late Middle Ages. The line he envisaged ran from the Somme estuary southward; it gave Germany the Channel ports of Boulogne, Calais, and Dunkirk, much of Flanders, all of Lorraine, the Franche-Comté and part of Burgundy, as far as Lake Geneva.

Under the peace settlement Hitler also intended to oblige his former enemies, as well as the pro-Axis countries, to agree on a uniform solution of the Jewish problem. France would be required to make available Madagascar to accommodate Europe's Jews. Hitler revealed this decision to Admiral Raeder on June 20 and evidently to Ribbentrop and Himmler soon after, for experts in the foreign ministry worked eagerly on the Madagascar plan throughout the summer. Himmler told a relieved Governor-General

Hans Frank that the Führer had ordered an end to the dumping of Jews in the Generalgouvernement of Poland after all, as they were all going to be deported overseas, including those now in Poland. At a Kraków conference the city's police chief SS General Bruno Streckenbach quoted Himmler: 'When and how the deportation begins, depends on the peace settlement.'

IT IS difficult to relate the political and military developments of the summer of 1940 to the industrial – and hence longer-range – decisions that Hitler took. In the second week of June he ordered the arms industry to convert to the special needs of the war against Britain: all effort must be applied to the mass production of Junkers 88 bombers and of submarines. But though the ammunition dumps were to be replenished, the peacetime consumer-goods industry was restarted. The field army was to be reduced in strength immediately by thirty-five divisions, which would provide industry with the manpower it now lacked.

The Soviet Union loomed ever larger on Hitler's horizon. As envisaged under the Nazi-Soviet pact, on June 12, Moscow issued an ultimatum to the Baltic state of Lithuania, followed by similar demands on Estonia and Latvia. Soviet army and NKVD police troops invaded these countries, and from the concentrations on Romania's frontier it was clear that further moves were intended there too. Army Intelligence even recorded a flood of reports that the Russians were going to invade Germany. The rapidity with which Hitler defeated France must have taken Stalin by surprise, for on the twenty-third Molotov informed Germany that despite an earlier promise to avoid war with Romania over the Bessarabian region, the Soviet Union would brook no further delay and was resolved to 'use force if the Romanian government refuses a peaceful settlement.'

To Hitler's evident consternation, the Russians also laid claim to Bukovina, a region formerly owned by the Austrian crown and never by Imperial Russia; Bukovina was densely populated by ethnic Germans. Hitler was determined to avoid a Balkan quagmire at all costs, and under German pressure the Romanian government bowed to *force majeure* on the twenty-eighth. To his adjutants Hitler expressed all the private anger about these two Russian moves – into the Baltic states and eastern Romania – that he was unable to vent in public. He termed them the 'first Russian attacks on western Europe'.

Since the autumn of 1939 Stalin had now annexed over 286,000 square miles, with populations of over twenty million people.

During the last days of June, Hitler had a number of private talks with Brauchitsch, some of which General Halder also attended. Halder was concerned by Russia's steady military build-up along the September 1939 demarcation line in Poland, and by her colossal armaments programme.

On June 23, Hitler ruled that the army was to be reduced from 155 to 120 divisions (although 20 of the 35 divisions to be disbanded could be reactivated on short notice if necessary); but he directed that the armoured and mechanised divisions were to be doubled, and that no fewer than seventeen divisions were to be stationed in the east, together with the headquarters of General Georg von Küchler's Eighteenth Army.

Two days later, Halder was to be found briefing his staff on the new element in all this, which was 'Germany's striking power in the east.' In an order to the three army group commanders on June 25, General von Brauchitsch mentioned that the various organisational changes would be effected 'partly in occupied areas, partly in Germany, and partly in the east.' On the last day of June, Halder explained to Baron von Weizsäcker that Germany must keep a weather eye on the east. 'Britain will probably need a display of military force before she gives in and allows us a free hand for the east.' On July 3 General Halder was even more explicit: 'It has to be examined from the angle of how best to deliver a military blow to Russia, to extort from her a recognition of Germany's dominant role in Europe.'

'TODAY, SATURDAY morning,' Morell had written on June 29, 1940, 'I spent about half an hour alone with the Führer. He's in magnificent health. This aromatic air does wonders for him too. He says he slept longer and better last night than almost ever before.'

Tannenberg was not one of his most attractively sited headquarters. The tall pine trees sighed in the wind, and it rained heavily. There were only a few days of sunshine in the week that he stayed here, beginning on June 28. The Italian ambassador called on him here; Hitler hinted that Germany was on the threshold of 'great new tasks,' without being more specific. In truth, he had not yet made up his own mind which way to turn. He mentioned to Schmundt that he was turning over in his mind whether or not to fight Russia. The jug-eared Wehrmacht adjutant told Below of this portentous remark afterward, as they walked gloomily through the dripping forest. (The scene of this exchange remained indelibly in the Luftwaffe adjutant's memory and helps to fix the timing of Hitler's decisions in the rush of history that summer.) Hitler also seems to have discussed this possibility

with his foreign minister; and one of Jodl's staff – whether on Hitler's direct command cannot now be discerned – privately began drafting an OKW operational plan for an attack on Russia.*

BY LATE June of 1940, Hitler suspected that the British had no intention of submitting; by the end of the first week in July, this suspicion had hardened to a certainty.

That the British planned to fight on – relying on their air force for the defence of their isles and a strategic attack on Germany's rear – was an unwelcome revelation for Hitler and the OKW operations staff. Hitler ordered his service commanders to start invasion preparations since 'under certain circumstances' the need might arise; but the mere thought of committing upward of thirty good divisions to an *opposed* operation 'overseas' must have smitten the Führer with grave apprehension.

His heart was not in it. 'The Führer does not really want to press on [against Britain],' Dr. Goebbels had noted as early as June 27. 'But he may well have to. If Churchill stays on, assuredly.'

Hitler kept putting off Göring's plans for a mass air attack on Britain, even though the British bombers continued with their forays into Germany. 'Churchill,' wrote Goebbels on the twenty-ninth, 'is just trying to provoke us. But the Führer doesn't intend to respond, yet.'

This did not mean that Hitler would not continue to threaten an invasion for the purposes of strategic deception. An OKW directive signed on June 28 by Lossberg – who certainly knew that a Russian campaign was now on the cards – ordered the Intelligence services to use all available channels to dupe the British into believing that 'Germany is preparing war against the British mainland and overseas possessions with all dispatch in the event that Britain desires to continue the fight.' A German air offensive would start once the Luftwaffe had recovered its breath; moreover, so the deception plan was to suggest, Germany, Italy, and Russia would soon open a campaign against the British position in the Middle East – this was the 'real' explanation for the five panzer divisions and the infantry divisions being withdrawn from France to the Reich. (These were the divisions being moved up against Russia.)

Hitler however had drawn up no plans whatever to attack Britain. Sending for Dr. Goebbels on July 2, he made this quite plain: he would instead

* This was Colonel Bernhard von Lossberg; see page 316 for his plan ('Operation Fritz').

offer them one last chance, in a speech to the Reichstag. If they did not accept, he would defeat them in four weeks: 'The Führer does not want to destroy the Empire,' recorded Goebbels after their private meeting, 'because everything it loses will accrue to foreign powers and not to us.'

The very next day Mr. Churchill displayed the extent of his determination to fight on: on July 3 he ordered his navy to open fire on the remnants of the French fleet anchored at Mers-el-Kébir, North Africa, an act of brigandry which killed 1,297 French sailors who had until few days previously been his allies, and wounding 351 more. This was Hitler's own language, and the message reached him loud and clear. Moreover, documents captured in France demonstrated unmistakably the kind of war that Britain was preparing: among the records of the Supreme War Council was one of a November 1939 meeting at which Chamberlain had disclosed that the British air staff had developed a plan to use its new long-range bombers for the destruction of the Ruhr, site of an estimated 60 percent of German industry. Hitler's agents had also discovered notes written by Daladier during a visit to Paris by Churchill and British air marshals on May 16. The French prime minister wrote of 'a long technical argument with his generals, who declare to me that the German advance into France can be slowed down by bombing the Ruhr. I retort it is absurd to believe that.'

Shocked by Mers-el-Kébir, Hitler scrapped the conciliatory speech he had drafted for delivery to the Reichstag on July 6, 1940, and postponed the session altogether.

THAT DAY he returned to Berlin, two months after he had sallied forth to fight the French. A public holiday had been declared in the capital, a million swastika flags had been distributed free to the people lining the streets to the chancellery, and roses were scattered in the streets for Hitler's motor cavalcade to crush. Dr. Goebbels himself broadcast the running commentary over the radio network as at three P.M. Hitler's special train pulled into Anhalt station.

The choice between attacking Britain or Russia was one that would now occupy him continuously until the end of July and to a lesser degree until autumn. Unexpectedly he was now confronted by two enemies, an ugly prospect at any time; but he had only one bullet left in the breech, as he himself later graphically put it. That the RAF might bomb his industry concerned Hitler less than the mischief Britain might create in the Balkans – the source of his oil. The planning documents recently captured in France

had been an eye-opener, betraying, as they did, the sympathetic attitude shown by Turkey, Greece, and particularly Yugoslavia toward the various moves contemplated by the Allies. In short, the Balkans could prove Hitler's undoing, and he told Italy's foreign minister as much on the day after his return to Berlin. The Italians wished to invade Yugoslavia now, but Hitler urged them not to; because if they did, Hungary could invade Romania and the entire Balkans would go up in flames. 'The Russians would therefore certainly advance toward their ancient Byzantine goal, the Dardanelles and Constantinople,' said Hitler. 'Things might go so far that Britain and Russia, under the pressure of events, could discover a community of interest.'

By now both General von Brauchitsch and Colonel von Lossberg, a member of Jodl's staff, had already realised that Hitler proposed a Russian campaign. On July 1, 1940 Brauchitsch had asked the War Department (OKH) to 'do some operational thinking' about this, and Halder had asked General Hans von Greiffenberg to start planning accordingly in the operations branch of the General Staff.

Simultaneously, Lossberg completed an OKW study of a Russian campaign, code-named 'Fritz' after his son; it was some thirty pages long. Early in July, during the sojourn of the OKW command train *Atlas* on a siding at Grunewald station in Berlin, he directed Captain von Trotha to obtain maps of Russia. He was undoubtedly right when he later suggested that there was a psychological factor in Hitler's decision to deal with Russia first. The Führer realised that victory in France had produced both in his command staffs and in the German people a smugness and a self-satisfaction and a savouring of the peace to come that threatened to undermine all hope of launching a superhuman crusade against the Bolsheviks. In April 1941 he was to say: 'The people must always be led by the nose to paradise. Today we are more powerfully armed than ever before. . . That is why we have to use the arms we have now for the real battle – the one that counts, because one day the Russians, the countless millions of Slavs, are going to come.'

In spite of all this, Hitler allowed the phoney invasion preparations against Britain to continue in the hope that this threat would bring the British people to their senses. Admiral Raeder argued that the British would not make peace without, figuratively speaking, a taste of the whip first: he urged Hitler to order heavy air raids on some big city like Liverpool; an invasion must be regarded only as a last resort. Hitler refused to unleash the Luftwaffe against Britain. The signs were in fact conflicting. He learned that the expa-

triate Duke of Windsor – who had served with the French military mission near Paris but had now escaped through Spain to Portugal – was bitterly attacking Churchill's needless prolongation of the war and predicting that 'protracted heavy bombardment would make Britain ready for peace.'

Hitler was perplexed by England's continued intransigence. He told Goebbels on July 6 that he had had his Reichstag speech, with the peace offer, ready to deliver when Churchill's bombardment of the French fleet at Mers-el-Kébir had upset the applecart. He assumed that Churchill had deliberately misinformed his colleagues about Germany's armistice demands on France, for Ambassador Stafford Cripps was heard to explain in Moscow that Britain could not make peace 'because Germany would without doubt demand the entire British fleet to be handed over to her.'

Repeating the now familiar arguments he had heard, Halder wrote on the thirteenth: 'The Führer . . . accepts that he may have to force Britain to make peace; but he is reluctant to do so, because if we do defeat the British in the field, the British Empire will fall apart. Germany will not profit therefrom. We should be paying with German blood for something from which only Japan, America, and others would draw benefit.'

HAVING FORMALLY postponed the planned Reichstag session Hitler left Berlin on July 8, announcing to his private staff that he wanted to think things over. For the next ten days he drifted purposelessly about Bavaria and Austria, and then retired to the Obersalzberg for a week of quiet reflection. The Hungarian premier, Count Paul Teleki, brought him a letter from his regent, Admiral Nicholas Horthy, on July 10; the letter is lost, but Horthy's handwritten draft hinted that Germany was the only power that could prevent Stalin and the Red Army from 'devouring the whole world like an artichoke, leaf by leaf.'

With Hitler's acquiescence, Joachim von Ribbentrop began an extended manoeuvre to win the support of the Duke of Windsor, who was now staying at the Lisbon mansion of one of Portugal's leading bankers prior to taking up a new post at Bermuda. Hitler's respect for the duke (whom he had met in 1937) was increased by fresh reports of the latter's unconcealed loathing of Churchill and the war, and by word of his willingness to accept high office in a Britain humbled by armistice. For the moment, German policy was limited to trying to procure the duke's arrival in an area within Germany's sphere of influence, for example southern Spain. Ribbentrop genuinely feared the British secret service had evil designs on the duke, for

he sent Walter Schellenberg to Lisbon with instructions to ensure that no harm came to him. Schellenberg was also to arrange for the duke and his duchess to cross back into Spain if they wished.

On July 11 Ribbentrop confidentially cabled his ambassador in Madrid that if the duke so desired Germany was willing to smooth the path for 'the duke and duchess to occupy the British throne.' By the last week of July it seemed that Ribbentrop might succeed: the Spanish emissary quoted the duke as saying that he would break with his brother King George and with Britain's present policies and retire to a life of peace in southern Spain – but the Lisbon embassy had impounded his passports.

When the duke had been told the time might come when he would again play an important part in English public life, and perhaps even return to the throne, he had replied in astonishment that the British Constitution made this impossible for a king who had once abdicated. Ribbentrop's ambassador reported, 'When the emissary then suggested that the course of the war might bring about changes even in the British Constitution, the duchess in particular became very thoughtful.' Small wonder that Mr. Churchill's government would make strenuous attempts, after the war, to locate and destroy these compromising secret telegrams.

HITLER'S SUSPICION of collusion between Russia and Britain was powerfully reinforced by reports of conversations of Russian diplomats in Moscow; these reports were intercepted by the German Intelligence service.

Thus on July 5 the Turkish ambassador reported to Ankara on a Moscow conversation with British ambassador Sir Stafford Cripps: Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin, the President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, had assured the Briton that Britain and Russia had many interests in common; it was necessary for them to arrive at an understanding. Similarly, a decoded Greek telegram, sent to Athens by the Greek legation in Moscow, reported on a two-hour interview with Cripps on July 6.

The Englishman had emphasised that the Russians were feverishly making war preparations ('*which is quite correct*,' noted the Greek telegram). Significantly the Greek envoy had retorted that 'it appears dubious to me that if Germany believes the Kremlin definitely intends to attack she will not take action immediately.' Cripps had claimed in his reply that because Germany could not be ready to attack Russia before autumn, and even then could not endure a winter campaign, 'she will be forced to postpone the war against Russia until next spring – by which time the Russians will be

ready too.' Until then both parties would avoid any disruption of their mutual relations. Speaking to the Turkish ambassador on July 16 Cripps admitted: 'I fully understand how delicate this matter is, but faced by imminent German attack . . . we are forced to come to some arrangement with the Russians whatever the cost.' These intercepted dispatches were placed in Hitler's hands on his return to Berlin.

Defeating Russia was therefore vital; defeating Britain was not. On July 16 Hitler, without noticeable enthusiasm, accepted Jodl's draft order to the Wehrmacht to prepare an invasion of Britain 'and if need be carry it out.' But the navy was more circumspect. The consequent withdrawal of a thousand heavy barges from the German inland waterways would paralyse large sections of industry; in addition, adequate local air superiority was a *sine qua non* for any invasion operation. On the fifteenth the OKW had orally asked the commanders in chief whether everything could theoretically be ready by August 15; on his arrival now in Berlin Hitler learned from Raeder that this would be quite impossible. Nonetheless the Führer ordered the stage to be set – the transport ships and crews were to be marshalled along the Channel coast in full view of the British. His aim was transparent, for the Luftwaffe meanwhile operated with a decorum and restraint hardly compatible with the strategic objective of fighting for air supremacy.

He returned to Berlin on July 19, 1940, and outlined to Dr. Goebbels and the others around his lunch table the long-delayed speech that he now proposed to make to the Reichstag. It would contain a short, truncated peace offer to the British people with the clear connotation that this was his last word on the matter.

The flower-bedecked Kroll Opera-house, the chosen setting for the speech, was that afternoon packed to overflowing. His delivery was as effective as ever, now narrating, now mocking, now ranting, now appealing. Its burden was an 'appeal to Britain's common sense.' What was unorthodox was that he announced an avalanche of promotions for all his principal commanders on the western front. Hermann Göring must have learned that he was to be created a *Reichsmarschall* – one rung higher even than field marshal – for he had already ordered a gaudy new uniform.

The peace offer fell on deaf ears. That same evening the British journalist Sefton Delmer broadcast over the BBC a coarsely phrased rebuff, and Churchill even ordered a fresh air raid that night.

Hitler still hoped reason would prevail. 'For the moment,' Goebbels advised his diary, 'the Führer does not want to accept that it is indeed Brit-

ain's response. He is still minded to wait awhile. After all, he appealed to the British people and not to Churchill.'

BEFORE THE day was over Hitler confidentially assured the sixty-five-year-old von Rundstedt, now a field marshal, that he had not the slightest real intention of launching a cross-Channel invasion. He also evidently repeated to Brauchitsch his demand that the general staff properly explore a Russian campaign. The strategic objective that Hitler outlined echoed Lossberg's draft, code-named 'Fritz': 'To defeat the Russian army or at least to take over as much Russian territory as is necessary to protect Berlin and the Silesian industrial region from enemy air raids. It would be desirable to advance so far into Russia that we could devastate the most important areas there with our own Luftwaffe.' Before leaving Berlin on July 21, Hitler collected Raeder, Brauchitsch, and Göring's Chief of Staff, Jeschonnek, in the chancellery and explained to them the need to take the necessary political and military steps to safeguard the crucial oil imports should – as was 'highly unlikely' – the Romanian and Russian supplies threaten to dry up.

On the question of an invasion of England Hitler concluded: 'If the preparations cannot definitely be completed by the beginning of September, it will prove necessary to ponder other plans.'

By this he meant that he would postpone the decision on England until May of 1941, and attack Russia this very autumn. While awaiting Raeder's report on the prospects for an invasion of Britain, Hitler toured Weimar and Bayreuth. There were now air raid wardens in the famous theatre and the printed programme in his hands included a full-page announcement on what to do if the sirens sounded.

On the twenty-fifth Hitler was back in the capital. Raeder again tried to dissuade him from an invasion of Britain. Hitler asked him to report again on the position in a few days' time. His final decision may however have been triggered by a fresh intercepted telegram that was shown him before he left Berlin for the Berghof in Bavaria late that evening.

In it, the Yugoslav ambassador in Moscow, Milan Gavrilovic, quoted Sir Stafford Cripps's view that France's collapse had put the Soviet government in great fear of Germany. 'The Soviet government is afraid that the Germans will launch a sudden and unexpected attack. They are trying to gain time.' Gavrilovic had also discussed the growing Russian military strength with his Turkish colleague. The Turkish ambassador considered war between Germany and Russia a foregone conclusion.

Hitler arrived at the Berghof in time for lunch on July 26. Here over the next few days he held a series of meetings with Balkan potentates.

One morning after the regular war conference in the Berghof's Great Hall, Hitler asked General Jodl to stay behind and questioned him on the possibility of launching a lightning attack on Russia *before* winter set in. This question was unquestionably an echo of the mocking tone adopted by Soviet leaders in their conversations with Balkan diplomats. Hitler himself referred to 'intercepted conversations' in this connection on July 31. He explained that he was perfectly aware that Stalin had only signed his 1939 pact with Germany to open the floodgates of war in Europe; what Stalin had not bargained for was that Hitler would finish off France so soon – this explained Russia's headlong occupation of the Baltic states and the Romanian provinces in the latter part of June. It was clear from the increasing Soviet military strength along the eastern frontier, on which Germany still had only five divisions stationed, that Russia had further acquisitions in mind. Hitler feared that Stalin planned to bomb or invade the Romanian oil fields that autumn. Russia's aims, he said, had not changed since Peter the Great: she wanted the whole of Poland and the political absorption of Bulgaria, then Finland, and finally the Dardanelles. War with Russia was inevitable, argued Hitler; such being the case, it was better to attack now – this autumn. He would make one last political attempt to explore Stalin's intentions before finally making up his mind.

WHEN THE Führer called his OKW, army, and navy chiefs to the Berghof on July 31, 1940, his reluctance to reach a firm decision on an invasion of Britain contrasted strongly with his powerful arguments in favour of attacking Russia.

Admiral Raeder sedulously gave the impression that the navy would be ready for the invasion of England by mid-September 1940; but having done so he also advanced formidable technical reasons why they should wait until May 1941. In the coming autumn only two moon and tide periods were attractive – from August 20 to 26, and from September 19 to 26; the first was too early, the second fell in a traditional foul-weather period. If Hitler waited until May 1941, on the other hand, the navy's fleet of battleships would be brought up to four by the new *Tirpitz* and *Bismarck*; that said, the admiral returned to Berlin.

After he had gone, Hitler commented to Brauchitsch and Halder that he doubted the technical practicability of an invasion. He was impressed by

Britain's naval supremacy and saw no real reason to take 'such a risk for so little.' The war was already all but won.

With more marked enthusiasm the Führer turned to the other means of dashing Britain's hopes. Submarine and air war would take up to two years to defeat Britain. Britain still had high hopes of the United States, and she was clutching at Russia like a drowning man: if Russia were to drop out of the picture, then the United States must too, because with the USSR eliminated Japan would be released as a threatening force in the Far East. That was the beauty of attacking Russia. 'If Russia is laid low, then Britain's last hope is wiped out, and Germany will be master of Europe and the Balkans.'

There was, alas, no time after all to commence a Russian campaign that autumn, as winter would set in before the operation could be concluded; but if it were started in the spring – May 1941 – the army would have five clear months in which to defeat the Soviet Union. The army he had so recently ordered cut back to 120 divisions would now be expanded to a record 180 divisions; whereas on June 23 he and Brauchitsch had agreed to allocate 17 infantry divisions to the east, he now proposed that by spring his strength there be built up to 120 divisions.

Neither Field Marshal von Brauchitsch nor General Halder, chief of the General Staff, offered any objections.

The Dilemma

For twenty years Adolf Hitler had dreamed of an alliance with Britain. Until far into the war he clung to the dream with all the vain, slightly ridiculous tenacity of a lover unwilling to admit that his feelings are unrequited. Goebbels watched this undignified scene with disquiet, revealing to his diary on the first day of August 1940: 'Feelers from here to Britain without result. Via Spain as well. London is looking for a catastrophe.' As Hitler told Major Quisling on the eighteenth: 'After making one proposal after another to the British on the reorganisation of Europe, I now find myself forced against my will to fight this war against Britain. I find myself in the same position as Martin Luther, who had just as little desire to fight Rome but was left with no alternative.'

This was the dilemma confronting Hitler that summer. He hesitated to crush the British. Accordingly, he could not put his heart into the invasion planning. More fatefully, Hitler stayed the hand of the Luftwaffe and forbade any attack on London under pain of court-martial; the all-out saturation bombing of London, which his strategic advisers Raeder, Jodl, and Jeschonnek all urged upon him, was vetoed for one implausible reason after another. Though his staffs were instructed to examine every peripheral British position – Gibraltar, Egypt, the Suez Canal – for its vulnerability to attack, the heart of the British Empire was allowed to beat on, unmolested until it was too late. In these months an adjutant overheard Hitler heatedly shouting into a chancellery telephone, 'We have no business to be destroying Britain. We are quite incapable of taking up her legacy,' meaning the empire; and he spoke of the 'devastating consequences' of the collapse of that empire.

The views of the Duke of Windsor may have coloured Hitler's view of the British mentality. It was reported from Lisbon that the duke had de-

scribed the war as a crime, Lord Halifax's speech repudiating Hitler's 'peace offer' as shocking, and the British hope for a revolution in Germany as childish. The duke delayed his departure for the Bahamas as long as he could. 'Undiminished though his support for the Führer's policies are,' reported the Lisbon ambassador, 'he thinks it would be premature for him to come right out into the open at present.'

Ribbentrop cabled his Madrid ambassador to send confidential word to the duke's Portuguese host, a banker, that Germany was determined to use as much force as was necessary to bring Britain to the peace table. 'It would be good if the duke could stand by to await further developments.' Firmly escorted by armed Scotland Yard detectives, the duke left however for the Bahamas on August 1. In his last conversation with his host he replied to Ribbentrop's message: he praised Hitler's desire for peace and reiterated that had he still been king there would have been no war, but he explained that given an official instruction by his government to leave Europe for the Bahamas he had no choice but to obey. To disobey would be to show his hand too soon. He prearranged a codeword with the banker for his immediate return to Lisbon.

From an agent in the State Department in Washington, Hitler obtained copies of the current despatches of the American ambassador in London, Joseph P. Kennedy; Kennedy was predicting in these that the Germans had only to continue the blockade – Britain's east coast harbours were already paralysed, the rest badly damaged. This was Hitler's view too. To Göring it was one more reason not to sacrifice his Luftwaffe in preparations for an invasion which he believed would never take place. 'If the losses we sustain are within reason,' recorded Goebbels after conferring with Hitler on the sixth, 'then the [bombing] operation will proceed. If they are not, then we shall try new ways. Invasion not planned, but we shall hint at it subliminally in our propaganda to confuse the enemy.'

Hitler, it seems was transfixed by his own foolish *amour* for England. On August 6 the army's Chief of Staff complained in his diary: 'We now have a peculiar situation in which the navy is tongue-tied with inhibitions, the Luftwaffe is unwilling to tackle the task which they first have to accomplish, and the OKW – which really does have some Wehrmacht commanding to do here – lies lifeless. We are the only people pressing ahead.'

To his Berlin lunch guests on the eighth, Hitler airily explained that the weather was still not good enough for bombing London. He then returned to the Berghof, where he awarded Frau Bormann the Mother's Cross in

gold for her considerable procreative accomplishments, and he inspected the new beehives Bormann had laid out – as though there were no more pressing problems at this hour in Germany's history.

AT THE Berghof, the tapestry was drawn aside at one end of the Great Hall and a cinema screen was set up at the other. Every available Russian and Finnish newsreel film of their recent war with one another was run and rerun, while Hitler and his staff studied the Russians' weapons and the tactics that the films revealed. The Intelligence reports now reaching Hitler were unmistakable and disconcerting: a gigantic rearmament effort had begun in Russia; in addition, according to Reinhard Heydrich's organisation, the Soviet trade missions were spreading Communist propaganda and organising cells in German factories. One day at the Brown House, the Nazi Party headquarters in Munich, Hitler told Ribbentrop that he did not intend to stand idly by and allow the Soviet Union to steamroller Germany; Ribbentrop begged him not to contemplate war with Russia, and he quoted Bismarck's dictum about the unwillingness of the gods to allow mere mortals a peek at the cards of Fate.

When Keitel submitted a handwritten memorandum against waging war with Russia if it could possibly be avoided, Hitler summoned him to a private interview and scathingly reduced the field marshal's arguments one by one: Stalin had as little intention of adhering to their treaty as he did; moreover, he pointed out, Stalin was alarmed by Hitler's military successes.

Keitel was hurt. Without a word he turned on his heel and left the room. Hitler retained the memorandum. Presumably it vanished into his safe along with his collection of other incriminating documents.

Keitel had already, on August 2, instructed his staff at the OKW that the Führer now recognised that Britain might not collapse that year. In 1941 the United States might intervene and 'our relationship to Russia might undergo a change.' The OKW's Admiral Canaris was also briefed in August on Hitler's intention of attacking Russia in the spring.

The OKW issued an order camouflaging the build-up of German strength in the east, and transparently, or perhaps super-cunningly, code-named it 'Eastern Build-up.'

Admiral Raeder however was informed by Hitler during August in the opposite sense – that these growing troop movements to the eastern front were just an outsize camouflage to distract from the imminent invasion of Britain.

In fact, the truth was the reverse. The OKW's war diary stated explicitly on the eighth: '"Eastern Build-up" is our camouflage order for preparations against Russia.'

Hitler's mind was on the shape of the Greater German Reich to come – and above all on how Germany was to police the more turbulent and dissident peoples that would come within the Reich's frontiers. This, he declared to Colonel Schmundt on August 6, must be the peacetime task of his Waffen SS. There would never be any need to call on the regular forces to take up arms against their fellow countrymen. These police troopers, noted Schmundt, must be unconditional champions of the Nazi ideology – a body of men who would never make common cause with the seditious proletariat; to increase their authority in the eyes of the people, the Waffen SS must prove their value on the coming battlefields; they must be an elite.

The Wehrmacht objected bitterly to this further entrenchment of Himmler's private army, but Keitel agreed with Hitler's arguments and ordered them given the widest circulation within the army.

GÖRING TOLD Hitler he needed three days of good weather to begin the air attack on the British fighter defences. On August 12, he announced that the attack would begin the next day. Hitler left for Berlin. When Raeder warned on the thirteenth that the invasion was a last resort, not to be undertaken lightly, Hitler reassured him that he would first see what results the Luftwaffe obtained. But those who knew him realised the invasion would never take place. 'Whatever his final decision, the Führer wants the *threat* of invasion of Britain to persist,' the naval staff's war diary noted on August 14. 'That is why the *preparations*, whatever the final decision, must continue.'

The newly created field marshals assembled in the chancellery on August 14 to receive their bejewelled batons from Hitler's hands. There are two surviving records written by field marshals. Hitler referred to Germany's greatest strength as her national unity. Since Britain had rejected Hitler's offer, a conflict was inevitable but would be initially restricted to Luftwaffe operations. 'Whether the army will have to be employed can't be predicted. In any case it would only be used if we were absolutely forced to.'

Leeb's account is important enough to quote at length:

> Probably two reasons why Britain won't make peace.
>
> Firstly, she hopes for U.S. aid; but the U.S. can't start major arms deliveries until 1941.

Secondly, she hopes to play Russia off against Germany. But Germany is militarily far superior to Russia. The film of Russian warfare in Finland contains quite ludicrous scenes. The loss of gasoline [imports from Russia] can easily be made up by Romania.

There are two danger-areas which could set off a clash with Russia: number one, Russia pockets Finland; this would cost Germany her dominance of the Baltic and impede a German attack on Russia. Number two, further encroachment by Russia on Romania. We cannot permit this, because of Romania's gasoline supplies to Germany.

Therefore Germany must keep fully armed. By the spring there will be 180 divisions.

As for Europe: there is no justification for the existence of small nations, and they particularly have no right to big colonial possessions. In the age of air forces and armoured divisions small nations are lost. What matters today is a unified Europe against America. Japan will have to seek contact with Germany, because Germany's victory will tilt the situation in the Far East against Britain, in Japan's favour. But Germany is not striving to smash Britain because the beneficiaries will not be Germany, but Japan in the east, Russia in India, Italy in the Mediterranean, and America in world trade. This is why peace is possible with Britain – but not so long as Churchill is prime minister. Thus we must see what the Luftwaffe can do, and await a possible general election.

The first two days of the Luftwaffe attack on England were a disappointment. The unpredictable English summer foiled every effort to co-ordinate the operations of Göring's three air forces (*Luftflotten*). A 'total blockade' of the British Isles was declared, but even this was a half-measure, for it was shortly followed by an OKW compendium of practices forbidden to the German forces: Hitler called attention to his strict on-going embargo on air raids on London and he forbade any kind of 'terror attack' without his permission. On the evening of the sixteenth, Hitler again left Berlin for the Obersalzberg; such hopes as he may have reposed in the Luftwaffe's campaign were temporarily disappointed. At the Berghof Hitler busied himself less with plans for invading Britain than with other ways of crushing her will.

He studied an earlier Brauchitsch proposal that an expeditionary force should be sent to Libya to support an Italian attack on the British position in Egypt; he also asked Ribbentrop to explore ways of bringing Spain into

the war. General Franco however was reluctant to declare war, for his country’s economy had not yet recovered from three years of civil war.

Shortly Hitler had renewed cause for anxiety about the Balkans. After a week of talks between Hungary and Romania on the disputed Transylvania region, war between those two countries became imminent on August 23. Romania appealed to Germany to arbitrate the dispute and – without consulting Moscow, as he was bound to under the pact with Stalin – Hitler agreed. Meanwhile he ordered the German army to stand by to occupy the vital Romanian oil region to prevent ‘third parties’ – meaning Russia – from getting there first should the arbitration talks break down. Canaris already had several hundred counter-sabotage troops in the region. When Field Marshal von Brauchitsch visited the Berghof on the twenty-sixth, Hitler explained to him the need to safeguard Romania without ‘as yet’ provoking the Russians too much; he asked the army to move ten good divisions eastward to the Generalgouvernement and East Prussia at once.

The next day Colonel Schmundt flew to East Prussia with Dr. Fritz Todt armed with instructions to search for a suitable site for the Führer’s headquarters during the coming Russian campaign.

One night late in August 1940 British aircraft appeared over Berlin for the first time and dropped a few scattered incendiary bombs. In the early hours of the twenty-ninth word was telephoned to the Berghof that the bombers had again struck Berlin and that this time ten civilians had been killed. Evidently the Reich capital now faced an ordeal of fire by night. That same afternoon Hitler flew back to Berlin.

He did not like this new development at all. Rudolf Hess, his deputy Führer, had nightmares, as he told a British cabinet minister a few months later, of coffins – rows upon rows of them, filled with dead children, with their weeping mothers standing behind them. Suspecting that his peace feelers were not getting through to the ordinary English people, Hitler asked Hess to establish contact secretly with his friends in Britain. On the last day of August Hess discussed this extraordinary mission with his old professor, Karl Haushofer, and three days later the professor wrote to his son Albrecht: ‘As you know everything has been prepared for a very drastic attack on the island concerned and the Boss Man only has to press the button.’ Hess asked Haushofer whether he could see any way of setting up peace talks ‘at some other location,’ perhaps with the Duke of Hamilton, a Scottish nobleman whom he had met briefly at the Berlin Olympics in 1936.

Hess's nightmares of children's coffins gave way to heroic daydreams, of flying single-handedly to England – he was an accomplished pilot – and of ending the war. He took his mission very seriously and flew to Messerschmitt's Augsburg factory on November 8 to inspect the new Me-110 long range fighter plane; by the end of 1940 he was flying one solo. In October or November Hess sent his driver to Munich's local airport to fetch a map of England, and then his valet to Lanai's bookstore to buy two maps of north-western Europe. Once, entering Hess's study which was normally a forbidden sanctum, his valet had found it strewn with charts. Hess asked the factory to fit auxiliary fuel tanks to 'his' Me-110.

Once, Messerschmitt's instructor inquired why he was asking whether it could still carry a bomb or torpedo as well as the drop-tanks – was he planning to fly to England with the plane then? 'No, no,' Hess had responded with a smile; then he hinted to his staff that he was thinking of trying out for himself a new method of mining British ports. In January, he ordered from the Munich sports outfitters Schuster's a leather flying-suit and fur-lined boots (he had previously borrowed them from Messerschmitt's). Hess's adjutant Karlheinz Pintsch would tell a fellow adjutant over a glass of beer on April 20 that their chief was worried, because he knew how reluctant the Führer was to destroy England, and because he saw war looming with the United States and the Soviet Union; he was planning to make personal contact with peace-loving circles in Britain, said Pintsch, and had been working on a memorandum to be handed to Hitler 'after his departure.' In April, Hess would obtain several books on the British Constitution, and visit Schwarz the Tailors in Munich's Prielmayer-Strasse to order a blue-grey Luftwaffe captain's uniform.*

Not relying on Rudolf Hess alone, in August 1940 Hitler had simultaneously sent the Berlin attorney Dr. Ludwig Weissauer to Stockholm with the task of briefing the British envoy orally on his peace offers: these included political independence for all the European countries occupied by Germany, including a future 'Polish state' but excluding Czechoslovakia; an end to the economic division of Europe; and no German claims on the

*The Luftwaffe uniform cost around 150 marks. It gained an almost mystical significance for the superstitious Hess. From that Munich outfitters it began an extraordinary journey that ended over fifty years later when it was returned by Berlin police authorities to Hess's adult son (it had been stolen from the 93-year-old Rudolf Hess's prison cell in Spandau by British soldiers a few days before his mysterious death in 1987).

empire or British colonies. This was, the attorney was to make plain, Britain's 'last chance' of avoiding an intensification of the hostilities.

On Churchill's instructions Weissauer was not even received in the Stockholm legation; and the private letter from Haushofer which Hess caused to be sent to the Duke of Hamilton, via a female acquaintance in Lisbon, was intercepted by Churchill's secret service in London. The prime minister's response was to order the heart of the German capital to be bombed again. On the following day Hitler lifted the embargo on bombing the centre of London, but still withheld the actual order. Those coffins of which Hess had dreamed would soon start filling.

on september 4, 1940 Hitler delivered one of his most forceful public orations. He mocked the thesaurus of reassuring predictions used by British officialdom to hint at his ever-imminent downfall. 'For example they say, "We learn that," or "As we understand from well-informed circles," or "As we hear from well-placed authorities," or "In the view of the experts" – in fact they once went as far as announcing, "It is believed that there may be reason to believe. . ."' He mocked that after Germany had thrown the Allies out of Norway they had changed their tune: 'We only wanted to lure the Germans up there. What a unique triumph that was for us!' After France's defeat Britain had rejoiced that now she need only defend herself. 'And if Britain is now consumed with curiosity and asks, Well, why doesn't he invade? I answer, Calm down, he's coming!'

As for the night bombardment of Germany's Ruhr cities that Churchill had begun three months before, Hitler now announced he would reply measure for measure and more. 'If they proclaim they will attack our cities on a grand scale, we shall *wipe their cities out!*' On the fifth however Churchill's bombers came again to the Reich capital, killing fifteen more Berliners. Over lunch on September 6, it was plain that Hitler's patience was at low ebb. 'The Führer,' noted Goebbels, 'is fed up. He clears London for bombing. It is to begin tonight.'

Whether Göring had formally been advised that Hitler proposed to fulfil his cherished ambition of attacking Russia is uncertain. Jodl's staff certainly noticed on the fifth that the Reichsmarschall showed no interest in preparing for the invasion of England, 'as he does not believe it will be carried out.' Göring established a headquarters on the Channel coast and personally directed the new air offensive, which opened that night with a bombardment of London, though still only the docks and oil refineries.

Hitler's naval adjutant had privately informed Admiral Raeder that a Führer headquarters was already being built for the Russian campaign. On September 6 the naval chief, whom Hitler had inherited from the outgoing Weimar Republic, arrived at the chancellery with a series of powerful new arguments as to why Germany ought to concentrate her attack on Britain's Mediterranean positions and on a sea and air blockade of the British Isles. Raeder warned Hitler that it would be impossible to launch both the attack on the Soviet Union, which the admiral discreetly referred to as 'the S-problem,' and the invasion of Britain simultaneously; the navy preferred the latter attack to be undertaken when the ice in the Baltic was melting, as this would tilt the balance against the Russian navy. Hitler assured the admiral that if he did drop the invasion, he would eject the British from the Mediterranean that coming winter; and for the first time he mentioned that Germany and Italy must secure footholds in the Azores, the Canaries, and the Cape Verde Islands. As Raeder summarised it to the naval staff: 'The Führer's decision to invade Britain is by no means definite. . .' Hitler again postponed the fateful invasion decision for three more days; the navy tactfully termed the current weather 'wholly abnormal.'

The bombing of London had now begun in earnest. It was the 'Blitz' that Churchill desired and Hitler did not. Discussing the new campaign with his lunch guests on the tenth, Hitler again vacillated. Would Britain now give in, he asked? 'The military share my viewpoint,' wrote Goebbels privately. 'A city of eight million cannot stand this for long. . . We have wiped the smirk off their lordships' faces. We shall thrash them until they whimper for mercy.'

When Hitler assembled his commanders on the fourteenth – with Field Marshal Milch deputised to represent Göring, who was still posturing on the Channel coast – he began with a political survey. Milch wrote a detailed note in his diary: 'Moscow is dissatisfied with the way things have gone; they were hoping we would bleed to death.' He was giving military aid to Romania because Germany needed the oil, and to Finland because of the balance of power in the Baltic. While it was difficult to see into the future, anything might happen. 'New conflicts are quite possible.' He did not expect America's modest rearmament to take effect before 1944, and he certainly did not want the war to last that long. 'We have attained our objectives, so we have no interest in prolonging it.' From now on it would be a war of nerves, with the bomber attacks and the *threat* of invasion gradually wearing the British people down. 'If eight million inhabitants [of London] go crazy, that

can lead to catastrophe. If we get good weather and can neutralise the enemy air force, then even a small-scale invasion can work wonders.' He proposed, therefore, to wait a few more days before finally cancelling the operation. If it were dismantled altogether, it would come to the ears of the enemy and the nervous strain would be that much less. He would still not permit the Luftwaffe to carry out saturation bombing raids on London's residential districts, as Göring's Chief of Staff Jeschonnek had requested. 'That is our ultimate reprisal!' Three days later Hitler postponed the invasion 'until further notice.' His commanders knew what that meant; from now on only the *threat* of invasion was to be maintained. In reality, Hitler's mind was elsewhere.

During September 1940, foreign diplomats in Moscow reported mounting Soviet bitterness toward Hitler over the controversial Vienna Award and his guarantee to Romania – a guarantee which could only be interpreted as directed against Russia. There were caricatures of Hitler, Göring, the 'Nazi hydra,' and the omnivorous 'Fascist shark' in Red Army barracks. German Intelligence learned of a meeting of the Supreme Soviet on August 2 in which they were warned against trusting Germany because 'certain information indicated that after her victory in the west she [Germany] would start a war against Russia.' 'Indeed,' the officials had continued, 'we must get in our attack before our thieving neighbour in the west can get in hers.'

Under the now familiar rubric of 'dispersing the forces tightly concentrated in the west,' Brauchitsch personally signed an order for additional divisions to move east on September 6; two more armies were to join the Eighteenth Army there – the Fourth and the Second. This would bring up to thirty-five the number of divisions on the eastern frontier. On that same day, General Jodl ordered the Abwehr to feed to Russian agents false information indicating that the bulk of Germany's strength was at the southern end of the front; the Russians were 'to draw the conclusion that we are able to protect our interests in the Balkans from Russian clutches at any time with powerful forces.'

In fact for strategic reasons Jodl's staff recommended that the main military effort at the start of the attack on Russia should be in the north. Here, explained Colonel Lossberg in his draft campaign plan ('Fritz') submitted to Jodl later in September, there were better road and rail facilities, and the Russian influence in the Baltic region could be quickly extinguished; above all, an attack in the north would rapidly bring Leningrad and Moscow un-

der the German guns. Tactically, they must prevent the Russians from withdrawing in strength into their vast hinterland, as they had before Napoleon's Grand Army in 1812.

'Fritz' undoubtedly formed the basis of Hitler's later strategy against Russia. The main thrust north of the Pripyet Marshes was proposed by the colonel as follows: 'An attack by two army groups from the general line east of Warsaw to Königsberg, with the southern group the more powerful (the group assembling around Warsaw and southern East Prussia) and being allocated the bulk of the armoured and mechanised units.' Lossberg predicted that resistance south of the Pripyet Marshes would be feebler – plagued by internal unrest in the Ukraine fomented by the Abwehr's advance subversive operations. The further strategy of the campaign must depend on whether and when Russia caved in under the force of the initial German onslaught.

Only one possibility remained open to Moscow – to take the offensive first in order to disrupt the half completed German invasion preparations; or to invade the Romanian oil fields, perhaps using airborne troops alone. It would be the job of a future German military mission in Romania to forestall such a Soviet move. In Lossberg's view, however, the Russians would be forced for political reasons to try to thwart the German attack close to the frontier; otherwise they would be abandoning the flanking positions they had so recently secured on the Baltic and Black Sea coasts.

IN ROMANIA the king had abdicated in the crisis that had been triggered by the Vienna Award, and the ruthless but incorruptible General Ion Antonescu had been appointed the national leader and dictator. Antonescu secretly asked Hitler to modernise the Romanian army with German tanks and artillery and to lend him German staff officers. In return, he promised to deploy his forces exclusively on the Russian frontier and away from the Hungarian.

On September 19 the OKW issued a document stating that the 'real jobs' – which were not to be made apparent to either the Romanian or the German mission's members – were as follows:

1. to protect the oil fields from the clutches of a third power, and from destruction;
2. to enable the Romanian forces to fulfil specific tasks to a rigid plan aligned with German interests; and

3. to prepare the operations of German and Romanian forces from Romanian soil in the event we are forced into war with Soviet Russia.

The reader should be reminded however that even at this stage no irrevocable order for an attack on Russia had been given; Hitler was still only preparing the military machine.



Treading on the shadows of arms raised in salute, Himmler leaves headquarters in Munich, followed by his chief lieutenant Heydrich (AUTHOR'S COLLECTION)

Molotov

The six weeks preceding the doom-charged visit of Vyacheslav Molotov to Berlin in November 1940 are a period when Hitler's foreign policy becomes almost impossible to disentangle. He took counsel with the Spanish and Italians on ways of striking the British Empire at the periphery; he brought Japan into the Axis in a Tripartite Pact, and he even pawed over the possibility of an alliance with France. This much is clear. But what are we to make of his more determined attempts to lure the Soviet Union into joining the Tripartite Pact as well?

The impulse toward a *peripheral* solution was provided by Admiral Raeder. Early in September Raeder had examined with Hitler the strategic options open to Germany; by the twenty-sixth, when he came for a long private talk on the subject, he was convinced there were ways of pacifying Russia more elegant than brute force. Germany should throw the British out of the Mediterranean; it should provide assistance to Italy for the capture of the Suez Canal, and then advance through Palestine to Syria. Turkey would then be at Germany's mercy. 'Then the Russian problem would assume a very different aspect. Russia is basically frightened of Germany' – a point on which Hitler agreed. 'It is unlikely that any attack on Russia in the north would then be necessary.'

Hitler appeared to like this plan: they could then invite Russia to turn toward Persia and India – again on the British periphery – which were far more important to her than the Baltic. After the admiral left, the Führer mentioned to his naval adjutant, Puttkamer, that the interview had been enlightening, as it had checked with his own views.

The most intractable barrier to Franco-German co-operation was the interest that both Italy and Spain were declaring in substantial portions of France's African territories. Hitler postponed reaching a final decision on

their claims until he could meet their leaders and Mussolini. Small wonder that the High Command's exasperated war diarist lamented: 'Our command policy of late seems to be dictated only by regard for the feelings of the Reichsmarschall and the Italians.'

Of one thing Hitler was certain by late September 1940. If Spain were to join the war and seize Gibraltar, and if France were also to be encouraged to join the grand coalition, he must resort to 'fraud on a grand scale,' as he disarmingly put it to Ribbentrop: *each* aspirant would have to be left in the happy belief that his wishes would be largely fulfilled.

The first claimant to be deceived was Benito Mussolini, whom he met on the Brenner frontier between Italy and Germany on October 4. Hitler cunningly suggested that they lure Spain into the war by promising to deal with her colonial demands in the final peace treaty with France; Mussolini was promised Nice, Corsica, and Tunis. There would be something for everybody in the coalition.

For three days at the Berghof Hitler idled in the autumn sunshine, reflecting on his new political strategy. His timetable was clearly mapped out: he would first like to see the former French ambassador, André François-Poncet (whom he had always liked) in Berlin; then he would embark on a grand tour, seeing Marshal Pétain in France and next General Franco in Spain, before returning to France to settle with Pétain the terms of their future collaboration.

First, however, he would write to Stalin to tempt him with a share of Britain's legacy in return for Russia's participation in the coalition. 'If we manage that,' Brauchitsch was told, 'we can go all out for Britain.' Hitler instructed Göring to ensure that all the Russian contracts with German industry were punctiliously fulfilled so that Stalin would have no cause for complaint; but he also authorised the Luftwaffe to start extensive high-altitude photographic reconnaissance missions far into Russia.

On October 9, Hitler was back in the chancellery in Berlin. Ribbentrop suggested a summit meeting between Stalin and the Führer, but Hitler pointed out that Stalin would not leave his country. Hitler himself dictated a lengthy letter to Stalin on the thirteenth inviting Molotov to visit them very shortly in Berlin. If Molotov came to Berlin, the letter concluded, Hitler would be able to put to him the joint aims they could pursue.

ON OCTOBER 12, Hitler had issued a secret message to the services formally cancelling all invasion preparations against Britain. As Hitler gloated to a

visiting Italian minister on the fourteenth: 'Let the British announce what they will – the situation in London must be horrific. . . Let's wait and see what London looks like two or three months from now. If I cannot invade them, at least I can destroy the whole of their industry!' The aerial photographs which his bomber crews brought back proved the extent of the damage done to Britain night after night.

What perplexed Hitler was the total lack of plan and purpose behind the British bombing offensive. Germany had feared a ceaseless onslaught on her oil refineries, yet Churchill was making the fundamental error of attacking Germany's civilians and inflicting only negligible damage on her war effort in the process.

The uncomfortable realisation that as yet there was no defence against the enemy night-bomber confronted Hitler with a host of new problems. If only one aircraft approached Berlin, should the entire city be sent scurrying for the air raid shelters by sirens? On the night of October 14 a typical episode angered Hitler: there was an all-clear followed by a fresh alert as more enemy bombers were spotted approaching over Magdeburg. The population of Berlin's hospitals was twice forced to trek down into the shelters – this was not a burden he had planned to inflict on the *German* population at all. He sent for Milch the next day and ordered him to sort the matter out. Hitler was glad he was leaving Berlin for the tranquillity of the Berghof that night.

Back in Berchtesgaden, his only engagement of consequence was a private visit from the Italian Crown Princess Maria-José, the elegant spouse of Crown Prince Umberto and sister of King Leopold of Belgium. Hitler entertained her at afternoon tea on the seventeenth in the mountaintop 'Eagle's Nest.' The princess haltingly begged Hitler to release the Belgian prisoners. When Hitler refused, she steadfastly repeated her request. Hitler was impressed by her plucky manner. After the princess left his mountain, he joked: 'She is the only real man in the House of Savoy!'

IN THE special train *Amerika*, Hitler left Bavaria toward midnight on October 20, 1940, on the first leg of a rail journey that was to cover over four thousand miles within the next week. The French leaders were still unaware that Hitler was coming to them. Hitler's train pulled into the little railroad station at Montoire at 6:30 P.M. on October 22. The station area had been freshly gravelled and a thick red carpet had been rolled out. At seven, the short, stocky Pierre Laval arrived by automobile. In the dining

car Hitler briefly indicated his wish to speak with Pétain in person about the lines that France's future collaboration with Germany might take; Laval earnestly assured him that he too desired Britain's defeat. Britain, said Laval, had dragged France into an unwanted war, abandoned her, and then besmirched her honour at Mers-el-Kébir and more recently at Dakar. Laval promised to return with Pétain in two days' time.

Upon General Franco's willingness to enter the war would depend the tenor of the main approach to Pétain. By four P.M. on the twenty-third Hitler's train had reached the frontier town of Hendaye. Franco's train drew alongside on another platform, where the Spanish-gauge railway ended. The argument that followed was to haunt Hitler to the end of his life. He later told Mussolini, 'I would rather have three or four teeth extracted than go through that again.' In vain he tried to persuade the Spanish dictator to enter into an immediate alliance and allow German troops to capture Gibraltar. Franco refused to rise to Hitler's bait. It was clear he doubted the likelihood of an Axis victory. Hitler barely controlled his fury when Franco's foreign minister several times interrupted in a tactless way – usually at the precise moment when Hitler believed Franco was on the point of accepting the German terms.

Once he stood up abruptly and said there was little point in talking any longer, but talk on he did until dinner was served in his dining car. Hitler tackled Franco again, arguing with him about Spain's requirements of guns, gasoline, and foodstuffs until far into the night.

When at 2:15 A.M. the Spanish leader's train left the little frontier station to the strains of the Spanish national anthem, General Franco was no nearer to joining the Axis. It was clear to all who crossed Hitler's path in these hours of his jolting journey back to Montoire that he was furious. He mouthed phrases about 'Jesuit swine' and the Spaniards' 'misplaced sense of pride.' Over the next weeks, his anger at having been cold-shouldered turned to contempt. 'With me, Franco would not even have become a minor Party official,' he scoffed to Jodl's staff.

At three-thirty the next afternoon, October 24, Hitler arrived back at Montoire. He nervously left his train after lunch to make sure that a proper guard of honour was waiting to greet the 'victor of Verdun.' Pétain stepped out of his car wearing a long French military greatcoat and a general's red cap, beneath which gleamed silver hair. Laval followed. Pétain was evidently gratified at the dignity of the German welcome, but he would go no further than to confirm in principle his country's readiness to collaborate with

Germany. Pétain's military bearing had enhanced Hitler's admiration for him. He afterward said, 'France should be proud to have such a leader, a man who wants only the best for his own country.' He believed the Montoire conferences had accomplished all he had set out to achieve, and this was echoed in the first paragraph of the next directive he issued to the armed forces:

> It is the aim of my policy toward France to collaborate with that country in the most effective possible way to fight Britain in the future. For the time being there will fall to France the role of a 'non-belligerent' obliged to tolerate military steps taken by the German war command in her territories, and particularly in the African colonies, and to support those steps where necessary by operations of her own defensive forces.

Hitler's special train remained overnight at the Montoire station. He had planned to return to Berlin, but now something unexpected occurred. Hewel brought him a long, jealous letter from Mussolini which had just arrived via the OKW's coded-teleprinter service. The letter, dated five days before, contained an impassioned appeal by the Duce to the Führer to abandon his dangerous flirtation with the French. As for his own plans, Mussolini mentioned that the British menace looming over Greece was comparable with that which Hitler had so successfully forestalled in Norway. 'As far as Greece is concerned,' Mussolini noted, 'I am determined to act without hesitation – in fact to act very rapidly indeed.'

Hitler took fright and instructed Ribbentrop to arrange a meeting with Mussolini in a few days' time in Upper Italy. Surely the Italians would not attack Greece *now*, with the autumn rains and winter snows almost upon them? That would be 'downright madness' – it would be an open invitation to the British to occupy Crete and other Greek islands well within bomber range of the Romanian oil fields. The Balkan quagmire!

During his Brenner meeting with Mussolini, on October 4, Hitler had probably given theoretical support for an Italian occupation of Greece if – and only if – necessary to forestall a British invasion. Admittedly the Abwehr had reported rumours of an Italian attack on Greece some days earlier; during Friday October 25 the German military attaché in Rome cabled that Marshal Badoglio himself had informed him that they now had information that the British intended to occupy Greek territory and that the Italians had for their part taken all necessary precautions to intervene the

moment the first Briton set foot on Greek soil. But Badoglio had reassured him: 'I will inform you if it comes to that.'

Hitler's train eventually reached Munich late on Saturday. The two key dispatches from Rome that Sunday evening – the military attaché's discovery that Italy *was* going to attack Greece next morning, and the ambassador's report on Ciano's communication to the same effect at nine p.m. – were not deciphered by their Berlin recipients until Monday morning and had certainly not reached Hitler when his train left Munich punctually at six a.m. for Florence. Mussolini's troops had invaded Greece at five-thirty that morning.

The stunning news reached Hitler's train at Bologna, fifty miles north of Florence. Hitler's purpose until now had been to persuade the Duce not to attack Greece; Hitler also wanted to be in a position to give his friend his expert advice on the best thrust direction for the offensive, and to mount a German airborne assault on the island of Crete by divisions first moved to North African soil. Possession of Crete was after all the key to the command of the eastern Mediterranean. By the time Hitler's train steamed into Florence an hour later, eleven a.m., however, he had pocketed his intense disappointment at his ally's rash move, though he was hard put to control his anger when Mussolini strutted up to him and announced in German: '*Führer – wir marschieren!*' 'We are on the march!'

All Hitler's fears proved only too well founded. Italy had not committed nearly enough strength to the campaign. On the day after the Florence meeting, British forces landed on Crete. On November 3 the first British army units landed on the Greek mainland. Within a week Hitler had been forced to order the Wehrmacht to prepare an offensive against Greece to take the pressure off his harassed and headstrong ally. The schedule for spring 1941 – already crowded with possible major operations in east and west – was finally thrown out of joint.

Nevertheless, the signs had been there to see, had Hitler not been so afflicted with blind trust in Mussolini; nor can Ribbentrop escape his share of the blame. Hitler's naval adjutant, Puttkamer, has stated that his chief refused to take the warning signals seriously. On October 18 Jodl's staff had first heard rumours. On the seventeenth a colonel on the Italian General Staff had confidentially told a German liaison officer in Rome that the Italian attack would begin eight or nine days later. A senior official of the foreign ministry had then drafted a telegram to the German ambassador in Rome directing him to deliver a stern démarche to the Italian government,

but Ribbentrop had prevented the dispatch of this telegram, saying that the ambassador should merely direct a 'friendly inquiry' to Count Ciano. Hitler saw a full report by the ambassador on a conversation with Ciano. In this exchange, the Italian foreign minister pointed out: 'Italy has complete freedom of action over Greece. The Führer has conceded this to the Duce' – words which caused Ribbentrop to telephone his ministry and stop even the telegram about the 'friendly inquiry.' Hitler's decision was that Italy must be trusted, and that no inquiry was to be sent to Rome.

FOR THE next two weeks – ending with Molotov's arrival from Moscow – Hitler lost the initiative, thanks to Mussolini. He unenthusiastically examined one peripheral project after another. Now he began to regret that he had not invaded Britain. During this period of indecision, only the Luftwaffe bombing – which had now killed fourteen thousand people in Britain – and the U-boat blockade continued. Some time before, on returning through France from his meeting with Franco, he had cabled Admiral Karl Dönitz, the wiry commander of the German U-boat fleet, to join his train; he ordered him to build huge concrete shelters in the new submarine bases in western France, to protect the U-boats from enemy air attacks.

The Axis alliance such as it was had again reached low ebb. Throughout the summer the German army had encouraged Hitler to offer Italy armoured units to ensure victory in Egypt; at the Brenner meeting early in October the Duce had hinted that he could use German tanks, and Hitler had prepared to send his 3rd Panzer Division to help the Italians capture Marsa Matrûh; the army had sent a panzer general to carry out an on-the-spot investigation in North Africa. By the time the general reported to Hitler at the beginning of November, the Führer had determined to let the Italians stew in their own juice all winter. The panzer general's report from North Africa was the last straw. Hitler 'wrote off' all idea of sending troops to North Africa; he ordered planning to continue on a caretaker basis only. Ironically, it was to General Rommel that the Führer now bluntly proclaimed, 'Not one man and not one pfennig will I send to North Africa.' A few days later the disgrace of the Italians was complete. They had kept their battle fleet in harbour rather than risk it in an assault on Crete; now a handful of British torpedo planes attacked Taranto harbour and crippled three battleships, including Mussolini's most modern battleship.

Hitler's lack of strategic purpose was most clearly expressed in his rambling discussion with his supreme commanders on November 4 and in the

resulting Wehrmacht directive issued a week later. He now told his commanders that he wanted to speed up Spain's entry into the war and tackle Gibraltar as soon as the political negotiations were out of the way.

In the Balkans, an operation for the occupation of northern Greece (Macedonia and Thrace) was to be planned should need arise.

That Hitler desired the Dardanelles to come under German control is also evident. On November 4 however he commented to General Halder: 'We cannot go on down to the Dardanelles until we have defeated Russia.'

RUSSIA REMAINED the one great area where Hitler could take a bold initiative, and it still came higher in his list of priorities than invading Britain.

At the end of October, a member of Jodl's staff had noted: 'No orders of any kind have been issued for Case East, nor are any as yet to be expected.' In the admiralty it was optimistically believed that 'Case East is no longer considered likely, as things are going at present.' On November 4, however, Hitler remarked to General Halder that Russia remained the nub of Europe's problems: 'Everything must be done so that we are ready for the final showdown.'

What triggered Hitler's remark? The Nazi Party seems to have reminded Hitler where his real mission lay. On the last day of October Arthur Greiser complained at the way the eyes of the German people were currently turned west; Lebensraum could only be assured by conquests in the east.

'The Führer agreed that this opinion was a correct one,' noted Bormann, 'and emphasised that when peace is concluded absolutely every young and capable civil servant aspiring to promotion will have to serve a number of years in the eastern territories.'

On the eve of Molotov's arrival in Berlin, Hitler visited Field Marshal von Bock, his formidable new Commander in Chief in the east.

Field Marshal Fedor von Bock, convalescing in hospital, wrote:

> The Führer called, sat half an hour at my bedside, and was very friendly and concerned. The overall situation was covered in detail.
>
> He is furious at Italy's escapade in Greece. . . The ultimate – and highly undesirable – outcome is that the Romanian oil fields will be threatened by the British air force units from Salonika.
>
> This danger is so great that it may oblige us to take countermeasures. . .
>
> What will transpire in the east is still an open question; circumstances may force us to step in to forestall any more dangerous developments.

Much would depend on the outcome of Molotov's visit. In the secret directive which he circulated to his commanders on November 12, Hitler approved this wording: '*Russia.* Political discussions have been initiated with the aim of establishing what Russia's posture will be over the coming period. Irrespective of the outcome of these discussions, all the preparations orally ordered for the east are to continue.'

The Soviet foreign minister arrived at Anhalt station with a big bodyguard. Weizsäcker described them as 'good gangster types for a film' – he found it depressing that 130 million Russians were being represented by such a shabby bunch. Molotov was accompanied by a young official, ostensibly an interpreter, though he spoke not one word to the Germans. Weizsäcker wrote in his diary: 'All are obviously afraid of us. Many of them quote Bismarck and his concept of a German-Russian collaboration.' And some days later: 'So long as the country is ruled by officials like those we have seen here, it's less to be feared than when the czars were in power!'

Not since his talks with the British before Munich, in 1938, had Adolf Hitler heard such tough language as Molotov used on November 12 and 13. As Ribbentrop had done before him, Hitler harangued the Russian minister as though he were at a Party rally: if Russia wanted to share in the booty as the British Empire fell apart, then now was the time to declare Soviet solidarity with the Tripartite Pact powers. He sympathised, he said, with Russia's desire for an outlet to the high seas, and suggested that she should expand southward from Batum and Baku toward the Persian Gulf and India; Germany would expand into Africa. As for Russia's interest in the Dardanelles, Hitler restated his willingness to call for the renegotiation of the 1936 Montreux Convention, which governed the straits, to bring it into line with Moscow's defensive interests.

The demands which Molotov stated were shockers. Russia wanted another stab at Finland – she intended to occupy and annex the whole country, which had, after all, been assigned her by the 1939 pact which he had signed with Ribbentrop in Moscow. Hitler, however, needed Finland's nickel and timber supplies. When Molotov announced Russia's intention of inviting Bulgaria to sign a non-aggression pact which would permit the establishment of a Soviet base near the Dardanelles, Hitler ironically inquired whether Bulgaria had *asked* for such assistance; pressed later by Molotov for a reply to Soviet terms, Hitler evasively answered that he must consult Mussolini!

Each of Molotov's conferences with Hitler was terminated by the warning of approaching British aircraft, and his dinner at the Soviet embassy on

the thirteenth ended abruptly for the same reason. Ribbentrop invited Molotov to the concrete shelter at his home; here the Soviet foreign minister revealed that Moscow could never entirely forgo an interest in the western approaches to the *Baltic* either – the Kattegat and Skagerrak.

When Ribbentrop told his Führer of this, Hitler was stunned. 'He demanded that we give him military bases on Danish soil on the outlets to the North Sea,' Hitler was to recall in the last week of his life. 'He had already staked a claim to them. He demanded Constantinople, Romania, Bulgaria, and Finland – and *we* were supposed to be the victors!'

While the public was deliberately fed the impression that the formal Nazi–Soviet discussions had been harmonious and successful, within the chancellery there was no doubt that they had reached the parting of the ways.

Irrevocable and terrible in its finality, the decision which Adolf Hitler now took was one he never regretted, even in the abyss of ultimate defeat.



In happier times, Hitler visits Italy. He was 'afflicted with blind trust in Mussolini,' and this eventually proved his undoing (AUTHOR'S COLLECTION)

The 'Barbarossa' Directive

Opinion among Hitler's principal advisers was divided about the Russian campaign. Ribbentrop had been convinced there was no alternative. Brauchitsch certainly did not oppose it. Keitel's opposition had been stilled. Jodl unquestionably regarded the Russian campaign as inevitable. Goebbels, upon whom would fall the task of preparing the German people, had not been informed. Only Göring and Raeder voiced pertinent objections. Heinrich Himmler probably echoed Hitler's views most closely in a November 1940 speech to Party officials:

> Up to now, by means of this [Russo-German friendship] pact Russia has subjugated entire countries and nations, apart from Finland, without drawing her sword from its scabbard; she has annexed large territories on her western and southern frontiers. Her appetite threatened to grow gigantically, so it became necessary for us to map out our mutual interests to each other afresh. During his long-overdue visit to Berlin, Molotov has been given the necessary instructions.
>
> If what I have heard is true, then Stalin is not permitted to start any wars for the moment, or any fighting, as otherwise he will be dealt a sharp rebuke by our own guns. This order holds good both for her [the Soviet Union's] evil designs on Finland and for any she may have in the south or south-east. She is permitted to launch military operations only with the Führer's express permission. To put muscle into our orders, we have based enough troops along our eastern frontier for the Red czar in Moscow to take them seriously. . . Russia is militarily quite harmless. Her officer corps is so poor that they do not even bear comparison with our NCOs; her army is as badly equipped as trained. They cannot possibly be any danger to us.

Before ten days had passed, it became even more evident that the Russians' aims were irreconcilable with Hitler's. Ribbentrop had submitted to Moscow a draft treaty embodying the substance of Hitler's oral offer to Molotov: Germany's territorial expansion would take place in Central Africa; Italy's in north and north-east Africa; Japan's in the Far Fast; and the Soviet Union's toward the Indian Ocean. On November 25, Molotov submitted the four conditions on which Russia would sign. The first two – a demand that Hitler evacuate from Finland the troops sent in August 1940, and that Bulgaria conclude a pact with Russia granting her military bases within range of the Bosphorus – were wholly unacceptable to Hitler. He instructed Ribbentrop to make no reply at all.

Hitler had retreated from these traumatic events in Berlin on November 16, and spent the next few days at the Berghof. He privately notified King Boris of Bulgaria of the proposals that Molotov had outlined for Soviet 'protection' of his country. The short, swarthy Bulgarian monarch spoke fluent German and had an easygoing manner which tended to win over the Führer. He liked to stroll through Munich's bohemian quarter and the English Gardens. He was a shrewd businessman, and provided that Hitler did not compromise him too early he expressed himself willing to let German divisions cross Bulgarian territory when the time came to attack northern Greece. Hitler offered him western Thrace as an outlet to the Aegean if Bulgarian troops would participate, but in the king's view this was going too far. Bulgaria was also reluctant to join the Tripartite Pact at present. She joined on March 1, 1941, simultaneously with the entry of the first German divisions.

By the end of the following week, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia had all joined the Tripartite Pact. In Vienna, the Hungarian prime minister agreed to allow German troops to cross into Romania. Yugoslavia would have to be cajoled into refraining from molesting the German movements toward the Greek frontier: Hitler insisted on luring Yugoslavia toward the Axis by offering her part of northern Greece (Salonika) and guaranteeing her possessions.

Italy's disgrace in the Balkans made it easier to reshuffle Spanish and Italian claims on African territory – all the more necessary now that the Gibraltar operation's importance had been enhanced by the British foothold in Greece. When General Franco's foreign minister, Serrano Suñer, visited the Berghof on the eighteenth, Hitler gave him 'the friendly advice' to declare war on Britain as soon as possible. He promised to supply all the

wheat and oil that Spain would need. He could offer however no real answer to the minister's argument that the Spanish people were not psychologically ready for a new war, and he could make no concrete moves to replace the vague assurances he had tendered both at Hendaye and in a secret agreement that Spain had since signed with Italy and Germany concerning the African territories it was to receive. Hitler was well aware that if he made public the inroads that were to be made in Morocco, the French there would immediately declare for De Gaulle.

There were already signs that Pétain was treating with the enemy. The Spanish foreign minister advised Hitler that Pierre Laval was one of the most hated men in France for collaborating with Germany, and that this fact indicated the true sentiments of the French people. When Washington announced the appointment of an admiral as ambassador to Vichy in place of its present lowly chargé d'affaires, Hitler's suspicions of the 'old fogy' – Pétain – intensified. The Forschungsamt had reported on November 11 that secret talks were going on in New York between emissaries of Pétain and Churchill.

A number of untidy residual problems remained. King Leopold of Belgium had been brought to the Berghof on November 19, where he had hinted that if Hitler would broadcast an explicit guarantee of Belgium's future independence – as the British were doing – the Belgians might be open to military and political agreements. Hitler did not rise to the bait: he saw no need.

The second area that attracted Hitler's attention was southern Ireland. The Irish Republic had remained neutral, though with pronounced pro-German sympathies. In mid-November, the OKW had examined the possibility of soliciting an appeal from Dublin for German aid; but it was not until the twenty-second that German army Intelligence picked up a British radio message and deduced that a British invasion of southern Ireland was imminent. On the twenty-seventh Hitler asked his High Command to analyse the pros and cons of invading Ireland. If the republic fell into German hands it would surely spell the end of Britain. The answer he received was that a prolonged German occupation of Ireland in the face of Britain's huge naval superiority was quite out of the question. Perhaps no episode illustrates so vividly the whims which inspired Hitler's *ad hoc* military strategy.

Despite the remarkable resilience of the British people under heavy air attacks, all of his advisers saw the continued bombing of British industry

and dockyards – coupled with the submarine campaign – as the most likely way to bring Britain to her knees. Coventry and Birmingham were devastated by night attacks before worsening weather once again forced a halt to German raids. Hitler still lacked the ruthlessness to use the strategic bomber force to maximum effect. On the morning after the Luftwaffe's first raid on Birmingham he told a Hungarian visitor that he was sorry about the fine cities and the people being destroyed in Britain; it was all the fault of incompetent British politicians. Himmler also explained to Party officials: 'The Führer has no desire to destroy the British people or their empire. The British are a race related to our own and in their bones they are as unbowed as ever. This is displayed by the unheard-of toughness with which the British people has taken its beating from the Luftwaffe, month after month. . .'

On November 25, Hitler explored with Milch and Jeschonnek ways of attacking the British position in the eastern Mediterranean. The most important target would be the British fleet at Alexandria, but this could not be tackled until the Italians had taken Marsa Matrûh. Meanwhile the Luftwaffe was to help the Italians out of their predicament by attacking military targets in Greece. The Italian squadrons which had briefly assisted in the attack on Britain were to be transferred to Albania. Hitler complained to the two air force generals that the Italians were 'frittering' their forces away, and had brought the British bomber squadrons so close that Germany must now supply sorely needed anti-aircraft batteries to Romania (to protect her oil interests) and to southern Germany.

On December 4, Milch brought Hitler details of Göring's proposals: by basing the Tenth Air Corps in southern Italy, Germany could effectively block the narrows between Sicily and North Africa. Jeschonnek's deputy wrote after this conference: 'Discussion between Führer and Milch on possibilities of battering British position in Mediterranean. This is necessary as the Italian disaster in Greece is having psychological effects quite apart from any military disadvantages: Africa and Spain are beginning to waver in their attitude toward us.' Hitler handed Milch a letter to carry immediately to Mussolini. In it he warned the Duce that he must have these squadrons back by early February for use elsewhere. By the seventh, Milch and the Deputy Chief of Air Staff were back from Rome, reporting to Hitler on Mussolini's optimism about the situation in Greece. 'Midday, back in Berlin,' wrote Jeschonnek's deputy. 'Conference with Führer, who is considerably upset by the unpleasant consequences of the situation in the Mediterranean. He fears this may have an effect on Spain's attitude.'

That this was no idle fear was shown a few days later. On November 28, Ribbentrop's ambassador in Madrid had reported that General Franco was willing to proceed with the preparations for Spain's proposed entry into the war; Hitler assumed that this meant 'proceed immediately,' and on December 4 he sent Admiral Canaris to Franco with a personal letter proposing that German troops formally cross the Spanish frontier on January 10, which would mean starting the assault on Gibraltar, six hundred miles from the frontier, in the first week of February. In a long audience on the evening of the seventh, Franco bluntly educated Canaris that for economic reasons Spain could not be ready by January 10; Spain could only join in the war if Britain was on the brink of collapse. The alacrity with which Hitler now abandoned 'Felix' suggests that his instinct was screaming warnings against accepting any obligations whatsoever toward a second Latin nation.

Molotov's negative reply to Hitler's proposals at the end of November 1940 dispelled whatever hesitations he still had about attacking Russia. Visiting the sick Fedor von Bock again briefly on December 3, the field marshal's sixtieth birthday, Hitler warned that the 'eastern problem' was now coming to a head. This in turn made a joint Anglo-Russian enterprise more likely: 'If the Russians are eliminated,' he amplified, 'Britain will have no hope whatever of defeating us on the Continent.' To Brauchitsch, two days later, Hitler announced, 'The hegemony of Europe will be decided in the fight with Russia.'

Thus his strategic timetable took shape. He would execute the attack on Greece (code-named 'Marita' after one of Jodl's daughters) early in March 1941. Of course, if the Greeks saw the light and showed their British 'guests' the door, he would call off 'Marita' altogether – he had no interest whatever in occupying Greece. Then he would attack Russia during May. 'In three weeks we shall be in Leningrad!' Schmundt heard him say.

Virtually nothing was known about the Red Army: a complete search of archives in France – Russia's own ally – had yielded nothing. Hitler was confident that the German Mark III tank with its 50-millimetre gun provided clear superiority over the obsolete Red Army equipment; they would have 1,500 of these tanks by spring. 'The Russian himself is inferior. His army has no leaders,' he assured his generals. 'Once the Russian army has been beaten, the disaster will take its inevitable course.'

At three P.M. on December 5, Hitler's military advisers came to the chancellery to mull over each phase of these coming operations. Now for

the first time the two varying concepts of the Russian campaign were brought into informal synthesis. Halder's General Staff proposal was distinguished by a particularly powerful main drive toward Moscow. Lossberg's OKW study 'Fritz' attached more weight to the northernmost army group and the occupation of the Baltic coast; in his reply to Halder the Führer now drew heavily on Lossberg's arguments.

Both Halder's plan and Lossberg's assumed that the Russians must of necessity defend the western areas of the Soviet Union and the Ukraine; and both stated that the Russians must be prevented from staging an orderly retreat as in 1812. The army and OKW were also agreed that they must occupy as much Soviet territory as necessary. This would prevent the Russian air force from reaching Reich territory. Halder proposed that the offensive end along a line from the Volga River to Archangel.

Where Hitler took exception was to Halder's insistence that nothing detract from the main assault on Moscow. Hitler wanted the Russian forces in the Baltic countries to be encircled first; a similar huge encirclement action by Army Group South, south of the Pripyet Marshes, would liquidate the Russian armies in the Ukraine. Only after that should it be decided whether to advance on Moscow or to bypass the Soviet capital in the rear. 'Moscow is not all that important,' he explained. When the first draft directive for the Russian campaign was brought to Hitler by Jodl, it still conformed with Halder's recommendation of a main thrust toward Moscow ('in conformity with the plans submitted to me'). Hitler however ordered the document redrafted in the form *he* had emphasised: the principal task of the two army groups operating north of the Pripyet Marshes was to drive the Russians out of the Baltic countries. His motives were clear. The Baltic was the navy's training ground and the route which Germany's ore supplies from Scandinavia had to take; besides, when the Russians had been destroyed in the Baltic countries, great forces would be released for other operations. The Russian campaign must be settled before 1941 was over – for from 1942 onward the United States would be capable of intervening.

TOWARD THE United States Hitler was to display unwonted patience despite extreme provocations for one long year. American nationals were fighting in the ranks of the Royal Air Force, and United States warships were shadowing Axis merchant ships plying their trade in transatlantic waters. The admiralty in Berlin knew from its radio reconnaissance that the Americans were passing on to the British the information about these block-

ade runners. In vain Admiral Raeder protested to Hitler about this 'glaring proof of the United States' non-neutrality.' He asked whether to ignore this was 'compatible with the honour of the German Reich.' Nothing would alter Hitler's determined refusal to take up the American gauntlet. Nor would he be side-tracked into invading England.

In a secret speech to the gauleiters on December 11 he declared the war as good as won, and assured them that 'invasion [is] not planned for the time being.' 'Air supremacy necessary first,' concluded Dr. Goebbels afterwards in his diary, and added his own one-word comment on Hitler's psychoses: 'Hydrophobia' – Hitler had an aversion to carrying any military operation across the seas; he had also shrewdly refrained from revealing to Dr. Goebbels his plan to attack the Soviet Union. 'He's frightened of the water,' Goebbels recorded after again speaking to Hitler on the twenty-second about invading England; to which he added: 'He says he would undertake it only if he was in the direst straits.'

Unbeknownst to the propaganda minister, Hitler's eyes were fastened upon Russia. On December 18, Jodl brought him the final version of the campaign directive, retyped on the large 'Führer typewriter.' It had been renamed 'Barbarossa.' Partly the handiwork of Jodl, whose spoken German was very clear and simple, and partly the product of Hitler's pen, the eleven-page document instructed the Wehrmacht to be prepared to 'overthrow Soviet Russia in a rapid campaign even before the war with Britain is over.' All preparations were to be complete by mid-May 1941.

From now on his intention of disposing of the Soviet menace was the one constant in Hitler's grand strategy. His goals in Africa and his policies toward Spain and France had been reduced to a shambles by Italy's military humiliation. Mussolini's advisers had promised him it would take little more than a 'military two-step' to invade Greece but now the Greek army, counterattacking, was deep inside Albania, outnumbering the Italian divisions by more than two to one. On December 9 a further disaster began for Italy as the British army in Egypt opened a counteroffensive which was to throw back the Italian forces into Libya and result within a matter of days in the capture of thirty-eight thousand Italian troops and four of Mussolini's generals. British casualties were a little over a hundred men.

Not that Italy's disgrace was wholly a disadvantage; as Hitler explained to General Halder, he could now promise France everything if she would collaborate with the Axis. This honeymoon was to last less than a week,

however. In the early hours of December 14 the text of a letter from Marshal Pétain reached Hitler. He thanked the Führer for his honourable intentions in transferring to Les Invalides in Paris the mortal remains of Napoleon's beloved son, the Duke of Reichstadt, which had since 1832 reposed in Vienna; but he also advised Hitler that he had dismissed Pierre Laval and replaced him by Admiral Jean François Darlan, in whom Vichy had greater confidence. In vain Ribbentrop tried to secure Laval's restoration; the luckless minister was held incommunicado on Pétain's orders. Even greater was the further affront to Hitler of Pétain's refusal to attend the ceremony at Les Invalides; the marshal initiated the rumour that this was just a German trick to lure him to Paris and kidnap him – a canard which enraged Hitler. So now a new harpy tapped at his door – the possibility of signing a peace treaty with Britain, but this time at France's expense.

SOMETHING DISTANTLY resembling the spirit of Christmas overcame Hitler. Instructing Göring's Luftwaffe to suspend all bombing missions against Britain until the Christian festival was over, he set out with his personal staff on a Christmas tour of the western front. He planned to inspect the big gun batteries, and he wanted to celebrate the holiday with the aircrews of Göring's fighter and bomber squadrons. (Göring himself was spending a comfortable Christmas and New Year at his Rominten hunting estate, some twenty miles from the Russian frontier in East Prussia.)

A frosty interview with Darlan, Pétain's 'crown prince,' chilled the atmosphere of Hitler's special train; Darlan recounted how his family had always hated the British and had been fighting them now for three hundred years – a perhaps inappropriate confidence, given Hitler's present mood. Christa Schroeder wrote to a friend: 'We have not stopped moving since December 21. Christmas on the French coast – Calais and Dunkirk. As we were eating dinner in our special train on the twenty-third at Boulogne, the British came and started bombing, and our anti-aircraft roared back at them. Even though we were shunted into a safe tunnel I couldn't help feeling "a bit queer". . . On New Year's Eve the mood was more than painful.'

Hitler returned to the Berghof. Dr. Goebbels would be making the traditional New Year's Eve broadcast. Hitler had already approved the script, and marked it up with his spidery black-ink amendments. They were of a trivial nature, except perhaps for one: where Goebbels had wanted to proclaim 'Never shall we capitulate, never shall we tire, and never shall we be despondent,' Hitler had expunged the first four words.

Let Europe Hold its Breath

Hitler entered the New Year, 1941, with two distantly related ambitions: to knock out Soviet Russia and thus force Britain to submit with no injury to her empire, and to rescue Fascism in Italy from threatened oblivion. Through Admiral Canaris he had offered, using obscure diplomatic channels, to mediate between Greece and Italy, but in vain. 'The fact is, for better or for worse, Germany is tied to the Duce,' explained Hitler on January 4. 'In the long run you can only make history through loyalty,' he mused virtuously.

In the Balkans a dangerous situation had developed since Italy's ill-timed attack on Greece in October. Over Hitler's broad desks at the Berghof flowed the dispatches from Ribbentrop's experts. Familiar and unfamiliar Balkan potentates and diplomats were ushered past. In January the prime minister of Bulgaria arrived, followed a week later by King Boris again, still promising to join the Tripartite Pact but genuinely fearing that the Russians would invade the moment the Germans set foot in Bulgaria. Here too was Antonescu, reaffirming the Romanian willingness to fight for Hitler but asking now for mines and for big guns to defend his Black Sea port of Constanta (where seven hundred thousand tons of German oil was stockpiled) against Russian attack. No terrain could be less promising for modern armies than the Balkans. Before Hitler's troops could even get into Bulgaria, they would have to throw pontoon bridges across the swirling Danube River, nearly a mile wide. The roads were virtually impassable in winter and became morasses when the snow thawed. The crumbling bridges crossing the countless Balkan streams and dikes would never support the loads an army would impose on them.

Nevertheless, the Wehrmacht overcame all these obstacles: in the remaining weeks before 'Marita' German staff officers in plain clothes and

Volkswagens were sent throughout Bulgaria to supervise the strengthening of the bridges and the resurfacing of the roads.

To Hitler, early in 1941, the Balkans meant two things: the Ploesti oil field in Romania, now well within the reach of the RAF bombers even if the Athens government still refused them the necessary overflight permission; and Salonika, in northern Greece, from which the Allies had launched their deadly assault on Austria-Hungary in World War I. He called together his leading military advisers and Ribbentrop for a council of war at the Berghof. It began on January 7 and ended on the ninth with a major secret speech in which he outlined the reasoning underlying his grand strategy, at a length and level of frankness unfamiliar since his harangues of 1939.

People had over-confidently predicted, he remarked, that Britain would cave in under the pressure of the Luftwaffe bombing offensive. Now, not even Hitler accepted that: the British people's 'toughness' was a wholly unexpected factor, he admitted. 'Terror raids by the Luftwaffe have little point or prospect of success,' he explained. The Luftwaffe must concentrate on reinforcing the naval blockade and on attacking bottlenecks in the arms industry. Britain was already admitting a 10 percent loss in arms output. Rumours of Britain's growing military strength could easily be discounted by the simplest analysis of the raw materials position; at present Germany was producing twenty-four million tons of iron a year compared with less than eight million in Britain. Germany could marshal far greater reserves of manpower; in Britain the number of jobless was actually increasing – a sure measure of her industrial problems. The German naval blockade was only just beginning. 'The destruction of the English mother country is inevitable in time,' Hitler concluded. 'Britain is propped up by her faith in the United States and Russia.' Her wooing of Stalin was betrayed by many clues: from intercepts Hitler was aware of the diplomatic overtures Britain was preparing in Moscow; Britain had disclaimed any interest in the Dardanelles; and Russia's chorus of increased demands since the summer of 1940 was unlikely to be coincidence. Stalin was infinitely clever – he must be seen as an ice-cold blackmailer who would not hesitate to tear up every written treaty if it served his purposes.

Apart from Russia, Germany's position was now impregnable – at least for the coming year, Hitler added. Norway was safe from invasion. Occupied France wanted an end to the war; the unoccupied half still dreamed of a reverse in its fortunes, but he had prepared 'Operation Attila' to occupy this sector should General Weygand, that 'German-hater,' declare North

Africa for the Allies. He was still undecided about Spain: Franco had more than once broken his promise concerning Gibraltar, and he would still go no further than agree to enter the war once Britain was down and almost out. In the Balkans, only Romania was unreservedly friendly; Antonescu had made 'the best impression imaginable' on Hitler. Bulgaria was loyal, had feared Russian intervention until recently, but would join the Tripartite Pact in good time. Hungary was 'usable' at present. Yugoslavia was cool.

Therefore Russia must be Britain's last hope. 'They will only give up when we have smashed this last hope on the continent to smithereens.' The British were no fools, said Hitler; they must realise that if they lost this war they would no longer have the moral authority to hold their empire together. 'On the other hand, if they can pull through and raise forty or fifty divisions, and if the United States and Russia help them, then Germany will be in a precarious situation.'

He had always believed, he said, in destroying the enemy's most powerful positions first. 'That is why Russia must now be defeated. True, the Russian forces are a clay colossus with no head, but who knows how they will develop in the future?' The defeat of the Soviet Union must be swift and final; under no circumstances must the Russians be allowed to regroup after the first, brutal breakthrough. Again he called for the rapid occupation of the Baltic coast first of all. The generals' strategic targets were the annihilation of the Russian army and the occupation of the oil fields at Baku – on the Caspian Sea. Though immense and new, this latter demand should not, however, daunt them; their armies had also covered immense distances in the few weeks of the French campaign, Hitler reminded them. He concluded, 'When we fight this campaign, let Europe hold its breath!' From now until June 1941, Hitler made no mention whatsoever of Russia in his public speeches.

On January 5, 1941 a small British force had captured the Italian fortress of Bardia in Libya, taking forty-five thousand Italians prisoner. There were now only five Italian divisions left in Cyrenaica and five more in Tripolitania. Meanwhile the Luftwaffe corps which Hitler had transferred to the Mediterranean had opened its attack on January 6, sinking a British cruiser and damaging an aircraft carrier. Hitler sought for other ways of helping the Italians out of their self-created mess, like sending a mountain division to Albania, and a small 'blocking force' of German tanks and engineers to help the Italians hold on to Tripoli; his ambassador in Rome accompanied

Ribbentrop to the Berghof on the ninth and urged that Germany exert a greater influence on Italian strategy, but Hitler characteristically refused to do anything that would damage the Duce. Two days later he signed the directive ordering the army and Luftwaffe to prepare to support the Italian defence of Albania and Tripolitania.

Mussolini finally agreed to come to a meeting but stipulated that there must be no fuss and no photographers. Hitler collected him from a small railroad station near Salzburg at ten A.M. on January 19. Two days of conferences and strolls about the snow-clad Obersalzberg followed. Hitler had one 90-minute talk privately with the Duce, but from the record of the other conferences it is clear he revealed nothing he had not already stated to his own generals on the ninth, except that he made no mention of his plan to attack Russia soon. Indeed, he again averred that so long as the wise and prudent Stalin was alive Russia would adhere to her treaties.

This meeting brought to an end Mussolini's dream of fighting an independent war, parallel to Hitler's, in the Mediterranean. He accepted the offer of a 'blocking force' for Tripoli but could not accept the mountain division for Albania, as he needed the Albanian port space for his own reinforcements.

His humiliations continued. On January 22, Tobruk fell into British hands with twenty-five thousand Italians. The whole of Tripolitania was now in peril. The panzer specialist General Hans von Funck, sent to North Africa in mid-January, reported to Hitler on February 1 in the most pessimistic terms at the chancellery in Berlin: the Italians had no will to resist the British onslaught in North Africa. 'The crazy feature is,' said Hitler afterward to his staff, 'that on the one hand the Italians are shrieking for help but on the other hand they are so jealous and childish that they won't stand for being helped by German soldiers. Mussolini would probably like it best if our troops could fight in Italian uniforms there.'

In conference with his army and Luftwaffe chiefs two days later, Hitler again declared that militarily the loss of Italian North Africa would mean little; however, its political and psychological effects could be devastating; Hitler decided to send more than just a 'blocking force' to North Africa; he would send a light infantry and a panzer division to Libya, with a German corps staff.

He chose Erwin Rommel to command this Afrika Korps. In August 1942 he explained to Italy's Ambassador Dino Alfieri: 'I chose Rommel because he's like Dietl – he knows how to carry his troops forward with him; and

this is absolutely vital for the commander of an army fighting under extremes of climate, be it in North Africa or in the Far North.'

On February 6 he briefed Rommel and General Enno von Rintelen, the military attaché in Rome, in Berlin. He instructed Rintelen to ask Mussolini to put all the Italian mechanised units in Libya under Rommel's command. Rommel was to hold Tripolitania for the Axis powers, tying down the British and preventing them from breaking through to the French in Tunisia. 'Saw army's Commander in Chief [Brauchitsch] first,' wrote Rommel to his wife. 'Then the Führer. There's no time to be lost. My luggage is being sent on afterward. . . My head reels to think of all that can still go wrong. It will be months before things take effect!' His first troops began disembarking at Tripoli, in North Africa, on the twelfth.

Spurred on by the ambiguous attitude of Vichy during January 1941, Hitler put renewed pressure on General Franco to revise his views on Gibraltar; the British were certain – he argued – to let Spain down in the end. Franco, of course, had no inkling of the strict timetable Hitler had already drawn up; this explains the increasing irritability of Ribbentrop's telegrams to Madrid over the next two weeks. On the twentieth the ambassador cabled from Madrid that the 'Caudillo,' Franco, had cleverly skirted around the central issue – 'As to *whether* Spain would enter the war there is no question . . . it is only a question of *when*.'

The German ambassador was instructed to read out to Franco six points which would do little for the dictator's vanity. The first point read: 'Without the help of the Führer and the Duce there would not be any Nationalist Spain today. Nor any Caudillo.' If Franco did not abandon his 'vacillating attitude,' then the end of Nationalist Spain was only a matter of time. Franco angrily denounced this as unjust: he had never vacillated. The ambassador cabled Ribbentrop that the Caudillo seemed more hesitant than before. Ribbentrop cabled him to see Franco and read out a message beginning: 'Only the immediate entry by Spain into the war is of any strategic value to the Axis.' (This was the harsh truth.) Given the necessary promise Germany would at once release one hundred thousand tons of grain from Lisbon.

On January 28, Jodl pointed out to Hitler that it would be impossible to launch the actual assault on Gibraltar before mid-April, which meant that the hundreds of artillery pieces and troops involved could not be released for 'Barbarossa' in mid-May. Hitler evidently still pinned some hopes on Mussolini's talks with the Caudillo on February 12. A few days beforehand

he wrote the Caudillo a personal letter suggesting that in times of crisis nations could be saved 'less by prudent foresight than by a bold heart.' On the fourteenth Ribbentrop telephoned to the Berghof a message from the Duce. Franco had made it abundantly clear that Spain would not join the war. Spain was to be granted the whole of French Morocco; and the assault on Gibraltar was to be executed by *Spanish* forces, perhaps with German support. Walther Hewel wrote in his diary that day: 'The Führer is going to drop Spain. They will just go under.'

'In the evening, we sat for a long time with the Führer around the fireside,' continued Hewel's diary. 'The Führer talked about his pension – that of a middle-grade civil servant! He is going to write books – a third volume of *Mein Kampf* . . .'

Earlier that afternoon he had spent two-and-a-half hours nervously trying to persuade the Yugoslav prime minister to join the Tripartite Pact. Hitler suggested that it was illusory to expect the British to evacuate their foothold in Greece now. 'Only when our dive-bombers and armoured corps appear will they get out of Greece as hastily as they have on every other occasion that we employed these means. Germany has no demands whatever against Greece. Here as elsewhere Britain is the root cause of all the difficulties.'* When the Yugoslavs left the Berghof they said they would report to the prince regent in Belgrade and let Hitler know. On the outcome would depend 'Marita,' and Hitler had reason to be nervous.

THE FIRST wave of divisions was now moving toward the frontier with Russia – only a slow procession as yet; not until mid-March 1941 would the second wave begin. As Lossberg had pointed out, the German railway network was so superior to the Russian system that when the real race began, Germany could muster seven divisions a day and the Russians only five; the farther west the 'Barbarossa' divisions waited the better – 'the bigger will be the Russian surprise when the German troop concentration begins.'

When Field Marshal von Bock reported to Hitler on February 1, their conversation ranged across the attack on Russia: Bock agreed that if the

* Had Italy not attacked Greece, the difficulties would not have arisen. But Hewel was echoing his master's views when he wrote to a friend on January 23, 1941: 'It is actually regrettable that we are forced to smash and destroy so much that we do not want to smash and destroy and that should not have been destroyed for European culture and the mastery of the Germanic races.'

Russians stood their ground and fought, they would be defeated; and he wondered whether they could be forced into an armistice.

This might be one consequence of the German capture of the Ukraine, Moscow, and Leningrad, replied Hitler; otherwise the Wehrmacht must advance toward Yekaterinburg. 'Anyway,' he concluded, 'I am glad that we carried on with arms manufacture so that we are now strong enough to be a match for anybody. We have more than enough material and we already have to begin thinking about converting parts of our industry. Our Wehrmacht manpower position is better than when war broke out. Our economy is absolutely firm.'

The Führer rejected out of hand any idea of yielding – not that Bock had hinted at it. 'I am going to fight,' he said; and 'I am convinced that our attack will flatten them like a hailstorm.'

Two days later Field Marshal von Brauchitsch brought Chief of General Staff Franz Halder to the chancellery to outline the army's operational directive on 'Barbarossa.' Although army Intelligence believed the Russians might have as many as 10,000 tanks, compared with their own 3,500, the Russian armoured vehicles were a motley collection of obsolete design. 'Even so, surprises cannot be ruled out altogether,' warned Halder. As for the Russian soldier, Halder believed the Germans were superior in experience, training, equipment, organisation, command, national character, and ideology. Hitler naturally agreed. As for Soviet armament, he was something of an expert on arms production, he said; and from memory he recited a ten-minute statistical lecture on Russian tank production since 1928.

Hitler approved the army's directive, but once again he emphasised the capture of the Baltic coast and of Leningrad. The latter was particularly important if the Russians were falling back elsewhere, as this northern stronghold would provide the best possible supply base for the second phase of the campaign. Hitler knew that Halder had just had a first round of talks with his Finnish counterpart, General Erik Heinrichs, in Berlin. He was convinced the Finns would make ideal allies, although Finland's political strategy would be problematical as she wished to avoid a complete rupture with the United States and Britain. As he said to his staff, 'They are a plucky people, and at least I will have a good flank defence there. Quite apart from which, it is always good to have comrades-in-arms who are thirsting for revenge. . .'

With the third wave in mid-April, continued Halder, the maximum-capacity transport plan would begin, and the troop concentrations could

no longer be concealed except as a vast decoy operation 'to distract from an invasion of Britain'; but when the fourth and final wave of panzer divisions that had been re-equipping and resting in central Germany started rolling eastward from April 25 onward, an invasion of Britain would become an obviously impossible cover story.

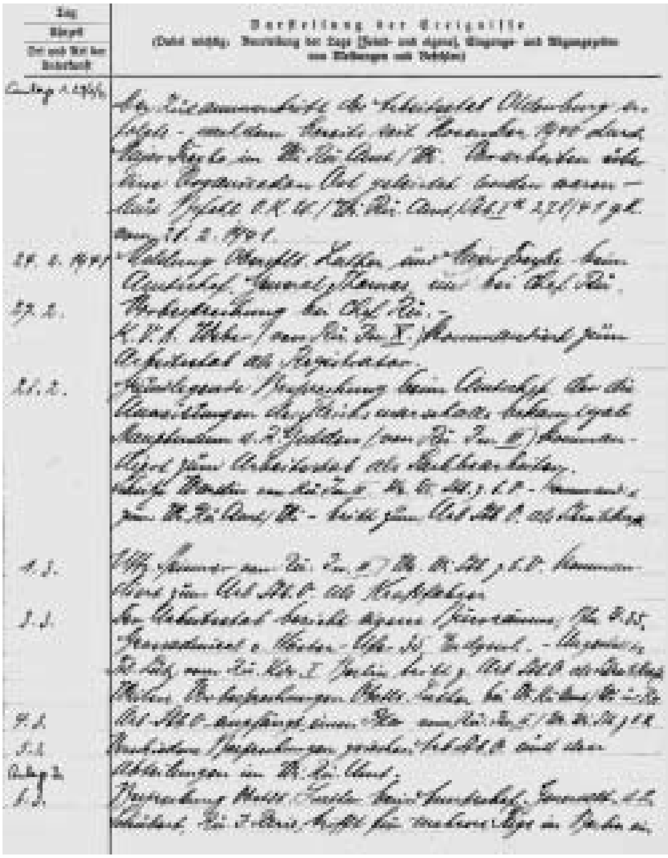
Hitler admiringly agreed with all that Halder had said. 'When "Barbarossa" gets going, the whole world will hold its breath – it won't move a muscle!'

PROBABLY NO major campaign has ever been launched upon scantier Intelligence. The services had furnished their lower commands with only the most inadequate information on the Russians. Maps were non-existent. The Russian aircraft industry was an unknown quantity on which the veil was only gradually being lifted. Recent indications were that it was being expanded at a disconcerting speed. Göring was apprehensive that the Russian air force might prove more formidable than the army Intelligence figures indicated. While Halder had confidently advised the Führer on February 3 that they would face only a small Red Army superiority in numbers, 155 divisions, by early April that figure had been raised to 247 divisions; four months later, when it was too late to retreat, the army admitted it had now identified 360 Soviet divisions in combat with them.

The whole of Hitler's strategy was based on the assumption that Russia would be laid low in a Blitzkrieg of only a few months. Now, on February 8, Keitel learned from his staff that while the Luftwaffe and navy would have enough fuel to last until the coming autumn, gasoline and diesel fuel for the army's tanks and motor transport would not hold out beyond mid-August, unless of course the oil fields of the Caucasus could be reached in time.

The rubber supply situation allowed for even less leeway. Much of Germany's rubber supplies had reached her from the Far East along the Trans-Siberian railroad. War with Russia would cut that link, leaving only an uncertain trickle supplied by blockade-running ships.

Later in February the OKW submitted to Hitler and Göring a survey of the economic side-effects of 'Barbarossa.' Keitel's economics expert General Thomas noted after meeting Göring on February 26: 'He shares the Führer's opinion that when German troops march into Russia the entire Bolshevik state will collapse, and that for this reason we need not fear the destruction of the stores and railway system on a large scale, as I do. The main thing is to get rid of the Bolshevik leaders rapidly first of all.' Göring's anxiety was about the weakness of the German supply lines. 'He recalled


Darstellung der Ereignisse

Found in a Pennsylvania dumpster in 2001: After lawyer Robert Kempner died, his family threw out files he had filched from Nuremberg – among them the priceless war diary of Taskforce OLDENBURG, *set up in November 1940 to plan the exploitation of the Soviet Union after its defeat* (AUTHOR'S COLLECTION)

that supply failures proved Napoleon's undoing. For this reason he has kept urging the Führer to concentrate more on the supply organisation and less on activating fresh divisions, some of which would not come under fire.'

Hitler however was already thinking beyond 'Barbarossa.' On the seventeenth, Jodl instructed his staff that the Führer wished them to study the problems of assembling troops in Afghanistan for an assault on India.

ON SUNDAY February 16, Hitler's chief Wehrmacht adjutant, Rudolf Schmundt, who had flown to North Africa with Rommel the week before,

reported back to the Berghof with photographs of Rommel's arrival and a first analysis of the position. Not surprisingly, Hitler awaited Rommel's operations 'feverishly,' as Schmundt wrote a few days later. Colonel Schmundt described to him the enthusiasm with which Rommel had thrown himself into his task. Hitler sanctioned all his requests – for antitank guns, mines, and Luftwaffe reconnaissance and close-support aircraft.

Rommel's first troops had covered the 350 miles to the Italian front west of El Agheila in twenty-six hours. Before he left Tripoli he set in train the rapid manufacture of scores of dummy tanks mounted on Volkswagen chassis to dupe the British into thinking he had a powerful armoured force. The letters Rommel sent to Schmundt exuded optimism from every line. Hitler decided to send out the 15th Panzer Division as soon as he could. In mid-March Rommel reported to Hitler in person, and then returned to Africa. Without waiting for the new armoured division to arrive, and against the explicit instructions of the Italian Supreme Commander, Italo Gariboldi, this German general launched a bold assault in early April; he did not halt until he had reached the Egyptian frontier and taken three thousand British prisoners, including five generals.

BY THE end of February 1941 the last major crisis before 'Barbarossa' had been overcome – or so Hitler believed.

At seven A.M. on February 28, since Greece still proudly refused to offer peace terms to Italy, the German Wehrmacht began throwing three big army bridges across the mile-wide, fast-flowing Danube from Romania into Bulgaria.

After several false starts, Hitler dictated to Fräulein Wolf an important letter assuring Turkey's President Ismet Inönü that he saw 'no reason, either now or in the future, why Germany and Turkey should ever be enemies.'* Inönü replied calmly, and Hitler was well pleased.

On March 1 we find Hitler in Vienna, where King Boris had authorised his prime minister to sign Bulgaria's formal entry into the Tripartite Pact.

Within one week the first German soldiers would be standing on the Greek frontier, facing British and Greek troops just as they had in 1918. This time things would surely be different: neither Turkey nor Russia would move a muscle against them.

* Johanna Wolf's shorthand pad with the letter to President Inönü would be found by American soldiers raking through the ruins of the Berghof in 1945.

Behind the Door

A FEW DAYS after Hitler's combined armies invaded Russia, Sweden as the protecting power gave Germany discreet permission for the Soviet embassy in Paris to be searched. The building was forcibly entered by a major general of the German police and a squad of forensic experts of Heydrich's security service.

Heydrich's report to Ribbentrop related: 'There were twenty-six Soviet Russians in the building. Five of them (four men and a woman) had locked themselves into strong rooms specially shielded by heavy armourplate steel doors; they were busy destroying documents and other materials in four furnaces specially constructed and installed in there. They could not be prevented from doing this, as even using special technical gear it would still have taken hours to force the rooms open.'

Heydrich's officers were less impressed by the haul of radio gear, time fuses, detonators, and explosives than by the furnaces found in the special wing of the building used by the GPU, the Soviet secret police. Investigation indicated that they had been used for cremating bodies.

Ribbentrop brought this report to Hitler, but Hitler had already heard the details firsthand from Admiral Canaris, one of whose department heads had himself inspected the Paris building. He had recorded: 'The completely isolated wing of the embassy in which the GPU's offices and execution chambers were located can only be described as a criminals' and murderers' workshop of the most outstanding technical perfection: soundproof walls, heavy, electrically operated steel doors, hidden spy-holes and slots for guns to be fired from one room into another, an electrical furnace, and a bathtub in which the corpses were cut up, completed the macabre inventory of these rooms, in addition to housebreaking implements, poison capsules, and the like. Thus there is every probability that . . . many an awk-

ward White Russian émigré or opponent of the Soviets in France vanished in this way – they literally "went up in smoke."'

Hitler ordered the Soviet embassy buildings in Berlin searched. In the Soviet trade mission headquarters at 11 Litsenburgerstrasse, the same armoured strongrooms with the same furnaces were found, and again there were stocks of guns and ammunition. In a cynical diary entry Goebbels wrote: 'These Soviet embassies are in fact the refuges of criminals. If a criminal gang comes to power, then they will use criminal means to conduct their policies. It is a good thing that Bolshevism is being got rid of once and for all in our eastern campaign. There was, after all, no room for the two of us in Europe in the long run.'*

Hitler expected the war in the Soviet Union to be merciless. Bolshevik methods were familiar to him. The brutality of the Bolsheviks in the Spanish Civil War, in Stalin's half of Poland, and most recently in the hapless Baltic states indicated that this was a permanent trait. In the Baltic countries Stalin had appointed commissars (usually Jewish) who had supervised the deportation and liquidation of the entire intelligentsia within a matter of weeks; these commissars had then been replaced by Russians who had disposed of their predecessors.

In the western campaigns Hitler had instructed the Wehrmacht to fight with discipline. In the armistice that followed he had explicitly ordered all troops in the occupied territories to perform their duties 'flawlessly' and with proper reserve; any drunkenness or violence was to be severely punished – if necessary by 'death and dishonour.' In the eastern campaign, however, no holds would be barred on either side. A member of Jodl's staff later wrote: 'For Hitler, Bolshevism is not an enemy with whom one chivalrously crosses swords. In his view we must expect all manner of knavery and cruelty. So Hitler proposes to meet him with the same fighting methods from the start.' Heydrich ordered that where the native Baltic populations initiated pogroms against their Jewish 'oppressors' they were to be actively encouraged.

To some extent the Bolshevik leaders by having refused to sign the Geneva Convention of 1929 on the treatment of prisoners of war had paved

* In the German edition of this work *Hitler und seine Feldherren* (Ullstein Verlag, West Berlin, 1975), these paragraphs were deleted without the author's knowledge 'for fear of an injunction from the Soviet embassy in Bonn.' The author stopped sales of the edition.

the way. They could do what they liked with German prisoners in their hands, but they could expect no quarter from Hitler either.

He issued these orders to Jodl in March 1941 as a guideline for the Wehrmacht for 'Barbarossa':

> The coming campaign is more than just a clash of arms. It will result in a conflict of two ideologies. Given the vastness of the country, it will not be enough to defeat the enemy armed forces if the war is to be ended. . .
>
> Wishful thinking alone will not rid modern Russia of the socialist idea; so this idea alone can function as the domestic political basis for the creation of these new states and governments. The Jewish-Bolshevik intelligentsia as the present 'subjugators' of the people must be got rid of. The former bourgeois aristocracy, in so far as it survives abroad, is also useless – they are rejected by the Russian people and are anti-German in any case. . .
>
> In addition we must do everything to avoid allowing a nationalist Russia to supplant the Bolshevik one, as history shows it will always be anti-German. Our job is to set up as soon as possible, with a minimum of military effort, socialist mini-states dependent on us. These tasks will be so difficult that they cannot be entrusted to the army.

The army's actual zone of operations was to be a belt as shallow as practicable, while in the rear Himmler's SS and various 'Reich commissioners' would see to the founding of the new state governments. The High Command (OKW) records speak obscurely of the need to put 'all Bolshevik headmen and commissars' out of harm's way: Himmler had been ordered by Hitler to carry out on his own responsibility 'certain special duties' of a kind to be expected in a fight between two diametrically opposed political systems.

The army's records portray Hitler's purpose more bluntly. Halder recorded the Führer as telling him: 'We have to set up de-Stalinised republics. The intelligentsia appointed by Stalin must be destroyed. . . In the whole of Russia it will be necessary to employ the most naked brute force. The ideological bonds are not yet strong enough to hold the Russian people together. Once the officials are disposed of, the nation will burst apart.' Halder's quartermaster general (traditionally responsible for army occupation policy) attended that conference; after discussing police matters with Heydrich, a few days later he drafted an army order giving the SS 'task forces' a free

hand to execute certain grim assignments within the army's zone of operations.

In a speech to his army and Luftwaffe generals at the end of this month, March 1941, Hitler prepared them too for the different character of the coming fight in Russia. He compared the Communist ideology with legalised criminality. 'We must put the arguments of soldierly comradeship right out of our minds,' he told his generals. 'The Communist is no comrade and never will be.' He suggested that 'commissars and GPU officials are criminals and must be treated as such.'

In conclusion, Hitler noted: 'I do not expect my generals to understand my orders to this effect. But I demand that they obey them.'

Early in March 1941 the British navy executed a lightning raid on the Lofoten Isles in Norway. Hitler regarded it as an unacceptable blow to German prestige and issued orders for the execution of all Norwegians who had aided the enemy. Admiral Hermann Boehm, the admiral commanding Norway, was summoned to the Berghof. At this conference Hitler decided it would no longer be possible to release 40 percent of the military strength in Norway for 'Barbarossa.' For the next three years the fear that the British would mount an invasion of Norway never left him.

As the ice thawed in Central Europe, the Wehrmacht's timetable began to unfold. Hitler's secretary, Christa Schroeder, wrote at the Berghof on March 7:

> It will soon be time to return to Berlin; we have been down here long enough. We shall probably be back in Berlin in the middle of the month. . . We have to be injected again against cholera and typhus – and that happened before all our big journeys!

Göring had now returned from his extended leave, and on March 6 he secured a long interview with Hitler in which he repaired the fences that had been broken in his absence.

At this time Göring's prestige was low following his defeat in the Battle of Britain. He was also embarrassed by the exaggerated claims of his pilots when 'destroyed' enemy aircraft, battleships, and aircraft carriers turned up intact. It is significant that although Göring referred to himself in February 1941 as 'the second man in the state,' Hitler was privately explaining to Keitel and Jodl that one reason why a powerful OKW would become nec-

essary in the future was that 'a man might later step into his shoes who might well be the best statesman but might not have as much military knowledge and ability at his fingertips as he did.' This could hardly refer to Göring.

Admiral Raeder had become bolder in his attacks on the absent Reichsmarschall, producing air photographs of Portsmouth, Plymouth, and Cardiff to show the ineffectiveness of the Luftwaffe bombing and pointing out that the crescendo of RAF attacks on Germany was proof that the enemy air force was anything but defeated. Only in bombing the enemy's sea lanes could the Luftwaffe be used to best advantage. These arguments were accepted by Hitler in his directive for economic warfare against Britain on February 6. He identified the loss of British merchant shipping as the most potent factor in the destruction of her war economy; Hitler emphasised: 'No decisive effect is to be expected from systematic terror raids.'

The facts bore this out. A French diplomat who had left Britain in December reported to the German authorities that although the night bombing of London and Coventry had affected public morale to some extent, Newcastle, where he had been stationed, had hardly suffered. Hitler personally underlined with blue pencil the man's remarks that 'massive attacks on Newcastle had not taken place up to his departure.' The diplomat had expressed puzzlement at this, 'as at present the Vickers Armstrong shipyards at Newcastle were building an aircraft carrier, two battle cruisers, a light cruiser, six or seven destroyers, and three or four submarines.'

Hitler ordered this brought to the Luftwaffe's attention, but he refused to injure Göring's pride by giving the navy direct control of the air force units that it needed.

In Albania, the Italian minor offensive, launched on March 14, had fizzled out. Hitler was secretly pleased that the Duce had again burned his fingers. The Greek general commanding the northern army secretly let the Germans know that he would agree to an immediate armistice in Albania if the Italian troops there were replaced by Germans; they would also talk about territorial claims, provided that there were no Italians at the conference table. Hitler however told both Brauchitsch and Raeder that even if Greece would now agree to evict the British, Germany would still have to occupy the whole country so that the Luftwaffe could command the eastern Mediterranean. By March 24, when Hitler departed for Vienna to attend Yugoslavia's signing of the Tripartite Pact, the British were believed to have disembarked up to forty thousand troops in Greece. The OKW instructed the German military attaché in Washington to see to it that the size of the

British force in Greece was given maximum publicity. 'The bigger the British talk, the better will be the propaganda effect of their defeat.'

Arriving in Vienna, Hitler was in high spirits as his train pulled into the station. He stayed at the Imperial Hotel, redolent with memories of March 1938. Once, his adjutants allowed a 'Frau Wolf' in to see Hitler – his younger sister, Paula, working incognito as a secretary in a military hospital. For a while they chatted about family affairs. Paula said, 'Sometimes when I am in the mountains and I see a little chapel I go in and pray for you.' Hitler was deeply stirred, and after a time replied, 'Do you know it is my absolute conviction that the Lord is holding His protecting hand above me?' Paula had been eleven when their mother died, and Adolf eighteen. He had not seen her for thirteen years after that; she remained of the opinion that it was a pity he had not become an architect as he had always wanted.

IT HAD taken all of March to persuade the ambivalent Yugoslavs to sign the Tripartite Pact, but the psychological blow to Britain was well worth the time invested; in addition, Hitler's armies fighting in Greece would depend on a line of communications extending for some 250 miles along, and only 12 miles away from, the Yugoslav border. Once, the Yugoslav regent Prince Paul visited him unofficially at the Berghof. He laid down harsh terms for his country's compliance with Hitler's plans: Yugoslav territory was not to be crossed by Axis troops; she was to make no military contribution herself, but was to receive Salonika as a reward. It was not until Germany agreed to these terms that the Yugoslav privy council agreed to sign the pact; however, anti-Italian feeling was running so high in Belgrade that several ministers resigned over the issue. After the pact was signed, Hitler sent for Keitel and expressed his pleasure that there would now be no further unpleasant surprises for them in the Balkans. The quagmire, the quagmire!

Seldom was a pact shorter-lived than this one with Yugoslavia. Early on March 27, Hewel brought Hitler the stunning news that there had been a coup d'état in Belgrade. Prince Paul had been overthrown. Crowds were demonstrating outside the German legation, the German tourist office had been destroyed, the Swedish envoy had been mistaken for a German and beaten unconscious, and British flags – distributed by the British legation – were appearing everywhere. Crowds were singing 'The Red Flag' in the streets.

The coup had been engineered by Yugoslavia's air force commander, General Dušan Simovic, a Serb known to be hostile to Germany. His revo-

lutionary Cabinet did not ratify the entry into the Tripartite Pact, but mouthed protestations of loyalty toward Germany.

Hitler set little store by them – he had mouthed enough such protestations of his own in the past. Storming that this revolution was as though somebody had smacked his fist into a basinful of water, he sent for Keitel and Jodl. As a result of his Austrian upbringing he had always been uneasy about the chauvinistic Serbs in Belgrade. He could hardly credit his good fortune that all this had happened now, and not later. In mid-May 'Barbarossa' was scheduled to begin; had the overthrow of Prince Paul occurred only then, it would have enormously complicated Hitler's plans. 'Luckily the enemy unmasked themselves now,' he crowed, 'while our hands are still free!' Hewel wrote in his diary: 'Göring, Brauchitsch, and Ribbentrop are sent for immediately. Decisions are rapidly taken. The mood is exhilarating. The Hungarian and Bulgarian envoys are summoned forthwith.' Shortly, the Forschungsamt tapped into a revealing telephone conversation going on between Simovic and his ambassador in Washington, Foltic – the former on his real plans, the latter on his talk with President Roosevelt.

Hitler told the Hungarian envoy Döme Sztójay that his message for the regent of Hungary, Horthy, was this: the hour had struck for Hungary's revenge; the Führer would support her territorial claims against Yugoslavia to the hilt. 'March back into the Banat!' he advised, referring to territories which Hungary had lost at Trianon; and he offered to Hungary the port of Fiume as an outlet into the Adriatic, which Admiral Horthy must surely desire. Shortly afterward Hitler received the Bulgarian envoy, Draganoff, and offered to him what was to have been Yugoslavia's share of Greece – Macedonia. 'The eternal uncertainty down there is over,' he rejoiced. 'The tornado is going to burst upon Yugoslavia with breathtaking suddenness.'

In a brief war conference with Halder, Brauchitsch, and Ribbentrop, Hitler settled the broad plan of attack in the Balkans. 'Politically it is vital for the blow to fall on Yugoslavia without mercy.' Göring would open the campaign with waves of bombers against Belgrade. By the small hours of the morning following the war conference, the formal directive was in Hitler's hands: 'Yugoslavia is to be regarded as an enemy and is therefore to be destroyed as rapidly as possible, whatever protestations of loyalty she may momentarily utter.'

The attack on Russia would now have to be postponed for up to four weeks. Even here fate was on Hitler's side: the spring of 1941 had brought unusually heavy rains to Central Europe, and the ground would have been

too marshy for the panzer divisions; the rivers and dikes were flooded throughout western Russia. The divisions Hitler now committed to the Balkans would have remained idle until June anyway.

PUNCTUALLY AT four P.M. on March 27, outwardly unruffled by the breathtaking events of the past few hours, Hitler received the Japanese foreign minister, Yosuke Matsuoka, at the chancellery. Hitler saw in Japan's territorial aspirations in the Far East a further powerful means of bringing about Britain's submission. It was Admiral Raeder who had first brought Hitler's attention to Singapore, the key to British supremacy in the Far East. Late in December, Raeder had shown him a letter from his naval attaché in Tokyo, reporting that certain Japanese naval circles were seriously in favour of capturing Singapore as soon as possible; Raeder suggested to Hitler that it would be very much in Germany's interest if Japan became embroiled with Britain, however lengthy and profitless her campaign.

Hitler had hinted obscurely to the departing Japanese ambassador, Saburo Kurusu, in early February that 'mutual friends could one day become our mutual enemies' – meaning Germany and Russia – but this message left no visible impression on Tokyo. Hitler instructed the OKW to draft a plan for wide-ranging joint consultation between Germany and Japan. The Wehrmacht and German industry must give their ally generous insight into all their most up-to-date secret weapons and designs, in the tacit hope that Japan would 'take active steps in the Far East as soon as possible.'

Later in February Hitler and Ribbentrop had urged the new Japanese ambassador, General Hiroshi Oshima, to recommend a Japanese attack on Singapore. Oshima said that Japan now felt it must prepare for war not only with Britain but with the United States and that this would take time; the preparations for attacking Singapore would be concluded by the end of May. On February 27, Ribbentrop cabled his ambassador in Tokyo: 'Please use every means at your disposal to get Japan to take Singapore as soon as possible.' Hitler still refused to play his trump card – revealing to the Japanese his firm plan to attack Russia. In a directive issued early in March, the OKW pointed out that this attack on Russia would provide Japan with an opportunity to launch her own campaigns, but warned that 'no hint whatsoever is to be given to the Japanese about Operation Barbarossa.'

In response to General Halder's urging on March 17 Hitler merely agreed to drop a hint as to the possibility when Matsuoka saw him. Hitler observed how cagey Matsuoka was about Singapore – the visitor stressed in painful

detail how little weight his voice carried on this issue in Tokyo – and made his own most direct reference to 'Barbarossa' in an aside to General Oshima at the luncheon given for Matsuoka on the twenty-eighth. He noted: 'If the Soviet Union were to attack Japan, then Germany would not hesitate to launch an armed attack on the Soviet Union.' When a few days later Matsuoka passed through Berlin Hitler offered him a similar guarantee in the event that Japan should find herself at war with the United States. On April 10, Ribbentrop was to be even more explicit, stating that 'Germany might yet start a war against the Soviet Union before the year is out; it depends on how she behaves.' But the Japanese response was disappointing – indeed, while passing through Moscow on his return to Tokyo, Matsuoka signed an agreement of neutrality between Japan and Moscow.

HITLER HAD left several of his key ministers in the dark about Barbarossa. He had not informed even Dr. Goebbels until shortly before Matsuoka's visit, because it was not until the propaganda chief attended Hitler's banquet for the Japanese minister on March 28, 1941, that he jotted these telling words in his diary: '[After Yugoslavia] the biggest operation will then follow: Against R. It is being meticulously concealed, only a very few are in the know. It will be initiated with massive west-bound troop movements. We divert attention every which way, except to the east. A feint invasion operation is to be prepared against England, then, like lightning, everything goes back [east] and up and at 'em.' It would call for a masterpiece of propaganda, he admitted, but: 'Great victories lie in store.'

Once more, on March 30, Hitler's generals and admirals were summoned from all over Nazi-occupied Europe to hear a secret speech in Berlin. He explained at some length his decision to attack Russia, starting significantly with Britain's refusal to make peace in June 1940. He spoke scathingly of Italy's misfortunes, charitably distinguishing between the plucky but poorly led Italian soldiers and their bumbling and devious political and military commanders. 'Why has Britain fought on?' he asked. He identified two primary reasons – the influence of the Jews and of Britain's international financial entanglements, and the dominant influence of the Churchill clique. The RAF's night bombing of Germany boosted British domestic morale far more than it damaged German industry. Now Britain was hitching her fortunes to the United States and Russia, declared Hitler. Of the United States he was not afraid. But Russia must be defeated now. 'We have the chance to smash Russia while our own rear is free. That chance will not recur so soon.

I would be betraying the future of the German people if I did not seize it now!'

Hitler urged his generals to have no compunctions about violating their treaty with Russia. Stalin had only cynically signed it; but he also urged them not to underestimate the Russian tanks or air force, or to rely too heavily on Germany's allies in this fight. He drilled into his generals that this would be a war between great ideologies, and as such very different from the war in the west. 'In the east cruelty now will be kindness for the future.' The Russian commissars and GPU officials were criminals, and were to be treated as such. 'It is not our job to see that these criminals survive.'

In a masterpiece of rapid General Staff work, the entire Balkan campaign plan was dismantled and remounted within nine days to make provision for the invasion of Yugoslavia by German forces. The rich and fertile Banat region would be returned to Hungary, the Dalmatian coast and Montenegro assigned to Italy, and Serbia itself placed under German military rule. Croatia was to become an autonomous state. It all seemed a very satisfactory end to the Balkan nightmare before it had really begun.

Russia's stance in the Balkans remained uncertain. Rumours multiplied. Was Stalin offering Yugoslavia's new regime a non-aggression pact? Had he secretly offered them arms and supplies? Was Stalin preparing to seize Romania? On April 5 the Romanian General Staff reported to Hitler that the Russians were stepping up photographic reconnaissance sorties over Romania, and that a new paratroop school had just opened at Kiev.

The die was cast. Hitler instructed Ribbentrop to ignore any fresh protestations of loyalty from Belgrade. When Count Ciano phoned after dinner on March 31 with news that the deputy premier of Yugoslavia was asking to see Mussolini, Hitler advised, 'Keep him away for the next few days.'

On April 5 the political clouds began to clear: Hewel brought to Hitler a disturbing Forschungsamt intercept proving that Stalin was on the point of signing a pact with the new anti-German regime in Belgrade. It was, therefore, now or never. An hour after midnight – it was now April 6, 1941 – he sent for Dr. Goebbels. He needed company. He told Goebbels that he was going to prosecute this war against the Serbs without pity. Hitler sipped tea until five-twenty, the appointed zero hour for his attack, then retired to bed as German armoured and infantry divisions began storming the frontiers of Greece and Yugoslavia. Three hundred German bombers were in the air, heading for Belgrade.

A Bitter Victory

Hitler had fully taken into account the susceptibilities of his new allies; in a directive issued at the beginning of April 1941, he stated that he would himself assign the necessary campaign objectives for the Italian and Hungarian forces. Horthy was no problem, but the Duce – his *amour-propre* injured by a succession of defeats – obliged Hitler to adopt public postures and contortions on Italy's behalf that for once united the OKW, the foreign ministry, the army, and the navy in a seething, uncomprehending anger at their Führer's indulgence of his inept ally.

Within twelve days of Hitler's attack, Yugoslavia was defeated. The British Expeditionary Force found itself fighting a hopeless rearguard action against the German armoured and mountain corps which had comfortably side-stepped the formidable Metaxas line to pour into Yugoslavia and Greece. The British had committed a real blunder in purchasing the coup d'état in Belgrade.

Hitler had ordered the attack to begin with the saturation bombing of Belgrade – with an eye to the deterrent effect on other powers, notably Turkey and the Soviet Union. As many as 17,000 civilians were killed in the air raid; robbed of their nerve centre, the Yugoslav armies caved in.

Over 340,000 Yugoslav soldiers were taken prisoner; the Germans lost only 151 dead although they bore the brunt of the fighting. Throughout the campaign, the Italians and the Hungarians displayed a marked reluctance to attack until the enemy had first been soundly beaten by the German troops. Horthy expressed the pious hope that in the coming fighting the Hungarian armies would not be 'led too far astray from Hungary'; at that time he had no knowledge of Hitler's plans to launch a coalition war against Russia within three months.

On the afternoon of April 9, German radio broadcast the first string of six special bulletins on the victories in the south-east.

Hewel noted the 'magnificent mood' at Hitler's chancellery. The mood was dimmed briefly when fifty British bombers arrived over Berlin. Hitler took refuge in his air raid shelter and, after the raid was over, sent Hewel to tour the blitzed area. Bellevue Castle, the crown prince's palace, the State library, and the university had been badly damaged; in the State Opera House Unter den Linden the fires were out of control. Churchill claimed he had killed three thousand in Berlin; wanting to play off the casualties in Berlin against those in Belgrade, Goebbels suppressed the real figure – just fifteen. In revenge, a week later Hitler sent the Luftwaffe to raid London continuously for ten hours with a thousand tons of bombs.

Late on April 10 his train left Berlin for Munich, and on the eleventh he continued through Vienna toward Graz. Here a tunnel took the single-track railway through the Alps. The OKW command train, *Atlas*, halted on the far side of the ice-cold, three thousand-yard-long tunnel; Hitler's *Amerika* stopped before entering it, near the little station of Mönichkirchen. This heavily guarded area was to be his headquarters for the next two weeks. His only contacts with the outside world were the OKW's communications system, the showing of rough-cut newsreels at the nearby Mönichkirchener Hof Hotel, and the visits of his generals and ministers.

On April 12, the Nazi banner was already flying over the ruins of Belgrade. On the fourteenth the Greeks began evacuating Albania. On the fifteenth the OKW learned that the British expeditionary force was in full flight toward its ports of embarkation. Broadcasting to the Yugoslav nation, Churchill offered deceptive comfort: the British were still standing right behind them, an unfortunately ambiguous statement which Goebbels instructed his press media to exploit to the full. Hitler's instructions to the OKW were that if Greece surrendered, all Greek prisoners were to be released – as a mark of his admiration for the valour with which they had defended their frontiers. Hitler laid down the principle that surrender offers were always to be accepted by German commanders, however small the enemy unit involved. Field Marshal List formally accepted the Greek army's surrender on April 21 even though the Greek commander, General Tsolakoglu, made it plain that he was *not* surrendering to the Italians, whom his forces had soundly defeated (and, indeed, had not seen for some days).

Mussolini was livid. Italy, blustered the Duce, had been fighting with 500,000 men and lost 63,000 dead in her six months of war with Greece.

Then suddenly the SS Life Guards had advanced so far that they held a bridge which actively blocked the Italian pursuit of the Greeks! Hitler reluctantly backtracked and told Jodl that List was wrong to have accepted the surrender and that the fight must go on until the Greeks surrendered to the Italians too.

Ribbentrop visited Hitler that afternoon, April 21. Hewel noted: 'Surrender talks are in progress with the Greek army. Obstacle: the Italians. Everybody is furious, even the Führer. He is always torn between soldier and politician.'

Not only had the Greek army surrendered to the Germans and laid down its arms, but the greater part of it was already in captivity; how were the Greeks now to continue fighting for Italy's benefit? Hitler sent word to the Duce's headquarters that perhaps the Italians would like to send a representative to assist Jodl in settling the surrender terms with the Greeks the next morning, April 22. Mussolini's forces had however opened a bedraggled offensive on the Epirus front as soon as word of the Greek surrender to List reached him; the Greeks were not only still fighting there, they were inflicting heavy casualties on the Italians.

The OKW rushed a draft of the surrender terms to Rome. When Mussolini read in the draft that the Führer wanted to allow the Greek officers to retain their swords and daggers, he protested. Here however the Germans were adamant – the whole world had marvelled at the Greek army's prolonged resistance, and Hitler considered it proper to recognise their bravery.

That apart, Hitler blindly accepted the Italian demands. To the fury of Admiral Raeder he announced that the Yugoslav and Greek navies were to be handed over to the Italians when they arrived; to the fury of both the OKW and army, Hitler also bowed to Mussolini's demand that the Axis troops stage a ceremonial entry into Athens, with Italians and Germans side by side. The nearest Italians were still a week's march away from Athens, which did not make things easier.

At Salonika, the surrender document was signed by all three parties on the afternoon of April 23, after Mussolini had played his final trick on Hitler. The Führer had forbidden premature release of the surrender news, but at ten A.M. the Italians had already suddenly broadcast it to the world. 'The enemy armies of Epirus and Macedonia have laid down their arms. The surrender was tendered by a Greek military delegation yesterday at 9:04 P.M. to the commander of the Italian Eleventh Army on the Epirus front.' Hewel summed it up in his diary: 'The Italians are acting like crazy idiots.'

In Croatia a breakaway movement had been fomented by Canaris's underground forces. General Sladko Kvaternik, an officer of the old Austro-Hungarian army, had seized power in Zagreb, aided by the Abwehr's 'Jupiter' organisation, and with Hitler's blessing he had set up an independent state with Dr. Ante Pavelic, who had spent long years exiled in Italy, as its *Poglavnik*, or chief. Hitler's decision to transfer the Dalmatian coastal region to Italy caused intense resentment in Zagreb. However, the Führer closed his eyes to the hatred Germany would reap from the Croats by this action. On April 24, Canaris's lieutenant, Colonel Lahousen, interviewed General Kvaternik, the new Croat war minister in Zagreb. Lahousen found that this ancient, upright nationalist's admiration for Germany and her Führer was boundless, but so was his hatred of the Italians, who were now wreaking their revenge on Dalmatia. 'The Croats are a people of honour, with a long military tradition,' complained Kvaternik, 'and it is bitter beyond words to be trodden down and humiliated now by an army that has not been able to pin one victory to its colours.' Kvaternik feared that this 'completely irrational political attitude of the Italians' would sow the seeds of serious future danger.

On April 24, 1941 the Hungarian regent, Admiral Horthy, visited Hitler's train. Hitler had received from the admiral many letters, written in a quaint, archaic German style. The most recent had come in mid-April; in it, Horthy had once more suggested a German attack on Russia and hinted that Hungary would participate if the whole of Transylvania – at present partly under Romanian rule – were promised to him. 'Nobody else knows I have written this letter, and I shall *never* mention it, even in any memoirs I may write.' On April 19, Hitler had acknowledged to the Hungarian envoy Sztójay that Horthy obviously felt deeply – as this letter showed – about the Russian menace; he nevertheless inwardly rejected making any commitment to Hungary at Romania's expense. According to Hewel's diary the Hungarian 'talked and talked' during the luncheon, and even argued, using one of Hitler's favourite phrases, that Greece had been defeated because she was a democracy, where 'the votes of two idiots count for more than that of one wise man.'

Keitel lured Horthy into plying Hitler with hunting anecdotes, knowing that Hitler abominated huntsmen. Those who knew Hitler well were familiar with his loathing of horses. When three years later, SS General Hermann Fegelein, Himmler's new liaison officer, clanked in wearing riding spurs, Hitler sardonically invited him to 'gallop next door' to fetch a certain docu-

ment. But nothing could now darken Hitler's mood. The British were in full flight: Hitler had killed or captured another twenty-two thousand elite troops. At Jeschonnek's suggestion Hitler ordered an airborne assault on Crete prepared as well.

Hitler's own mind was made up on the Russian campaign, but he still wanted to convince Ribbentrop of its necessity. He knew he would not win over the foreign ministry as such. Since its failure to give him advance warning of the Belgrade putsch, the ministry's stock had sunk still further in his estimation. He had decided to appoint the Party's chief thinker, the Baltic-born Alfred Rosenberg, to manage the new eastern dominions – impressed, apparently, by Rosenberg's early writings on the Bolshevik menace. Small wonder that Hewel's diary shows Ribbentrop 'off sick' for most of April 1941 – malingering, furious at this fresh erosion of his powers.

On about April 25 Hitler telephoned Ribbentrop in Vienna, summoned him to his special-train headquarters, and told him he had decided finally to attack Russia. Ribbentrop later recalled:

> He said that all the military Intelligence reaching him confirmed that the Soviet Union was preparing in a big way along the entire front from the Baltic to the Black Sea. He was not willing to be taken by surprise once he had recognised a danger. Moscow's pact with the Serbian putschist government was a downright provocation to Germany and a clear departure from the German-Russian treaty of friendship.
>
> In this conversation I recommended that he listen first to our [Moscow] ambassador, Count [Werner von der] Schulenburg. . . I wanted to try a diplomatic settlement with Moscow first. But Hitler refused any such attempt and forbade me to discuss the matter with anybody; no amount of diplomacy could change the Russian attitude, as he now recognised it, but it might cheat him of the important tactical element of surprise when he attacked.

On April 26 Hitler's train left Mönichkirchen for the former Yugoslav frontier. He motored to Maribor – newly renamed Marburg – and toured the German-speaking provinces which his Second Army had regained for the Reich. Everywhere there was a huge and fervent welcome, especially at Marburg's town hall. 'Then by train back to Graz,' recorded Hewel. 'An enormous reception there. . . The Führer is very happy – a fanatical wel-

come. Wonderful singing. The museum. Lunch at Hotel Wiesler, then left for Klagenfurt in the evening. . . Coffee at the castle, with infinitely ugly maidens provided from the gau's leadership school. But they could sing very nicely.'

Here in Klagenfurt, Hitler the next day met his old history teacher, Professor Leopold Poetsch; he had written in *Mein Kampf* that it had perhaps altered the whole course of his life that fate gave him such a history teacher – able to bring the subject alive.

By April 28 Adolf Hitler was back in his chancellery in Berlin.

That evening, Ribbentrop's ambassador in Moscow was ushered in. Hitler granted to Count Schulenburg just thirty minutes of his time. Schulenburg had not been officially informed of 'Barbarossa'; Hans Krebs, his military attaché, had been forbidden to tell him. But Schulenburg was no simpleton. The rumours sweeping Central Europe told him all he needed. To the ambassador it seemed that the Führer had drawn all his preconceived ideas from Vidkun Quisling, who had first whispered to Hitler that after the very first military defeats the unpopular Bolshevik regime would collapse.

Hitler asked him what devil had possessed the Russians that they had signed that pact with the putschist regime in Belgrade – was it an attempt to frighten Germany? The ambassador's opinion was that the Russians were just openly staking their claim on the Balkans; they were very uneasy about the rumours of a coming German attack as well. Hitler retorted that it was the Russians who had begun the mobilisation race, but the ambassador suggested it was characteristic Russian overreaction to German moves. If Stalin had not allied himself with France and Britain when both were still strong and intact, he would hardly opt for them now.

To Hitler this was a facile argument: in 1939 Stalin had *wanted* to encourage war between Germany and the West; how could he have foreseen that Hitler would emerge victorious so soon? Hitler decided now that 'Barbarossa' would begin on June 22, a Sunday, with the onset of the final top-capacity transport programme one month earlier.

The German armies in the south would be numerically inferior to the enemy. Army Group South could not mount the pincer movement originally planned to destroy the Russian forces south of the Pripyet Marshes but had to attempt an almost impossible encirclement action with its northern wing. Nonetheless, Brauchitsch was still confident that after four weeks of stiff fighting on the frontier the Russian resistance would melt away.

Persistent rumours of 'Barbarossa' were soon sweeping Moscow.

The most substantial evidence came to Moscow from Romania and indirectly from Belgrade. Hitler had been most frank in his overtures to General Antonescu. When Göring had seen Antonescu in Vienna on March 5 he had explained that 'one day the other oil supplier might drop out.' Göring had asked how many Romanians now lived on Russian territory, and he had made a scooping gesture by way of explanation.

Evidently Hitler had also told Yugoslavia's prince regent about 'Barbarossa' at the Berghof on March 4. British Foreign Secretary Eden told Sir Stafford Cripps as much; Eden identified his source as King George of Greece, the prince regent's brother. The Hungarian Intelligence service learned of this in Moscow and passed the information back to Admiral Canaris on April 11. A few days later the German naval attaché in Moscow was cabling that Cripps was now predicting that Hitler would attack Russia on June 22, a canard so 'obviously absurd' that he would do all he could to kill it.

Stalin's reaction to the warnings was illuminating.

At Cripps's suggestion the Yugoslav envoy in Moscow had at the beginning of April warned Stalin about 'Barbarossa.' Stalin had cockily replied, 'Let them come. We will be ready for them!'

HITLER'S BLITZKRIEG victory in the Balkans had wiped the smile off Stalin's face. An extraordinary period ensued in which the Soviet government tried to appease Hitler: grain, petroleum, manganese, and other materials began flooding westward, and the Soviet government even laid on a special goods train to rush rubber to Germany along the Trans-Siberian railway.

On the day the Japanese foreign minister departed for Tokyo, Stalin made a stunning personal appearance on the railroad platform, embraced the Japanese officials, and then searched out Ambassador Schulenburg and loudly pronounced in front of the assembled diplomatic corps, 'We must remain friends, you must do all you can for that!' Hitler studied all the reports, including one submitted by the Forschungsamt, on this puzzling Moscow scene.

Equally remarkable was the politeness of the Soviet remonstrance over eighty German violations of Soviet air space in the first half of April. After a conference with Keitel on Abwehr operations planned inside Russia, Admiral Canaris noted: 'General Jodl disclosed to me [afterward] that they are greatly worried about the Russians' soft and indulgent attitude toward us, and he added half in jest, in a reference to our No. 800 "Special Duties"

Training Regiment Brandenburg, "If these chaps" – meaning the Soviet Russians – "keep on being so accommodating and take offence at nothing, then *you* will have to stage an incident to start the war."'*

THROUGHOUT MARCH, Russian troop movements close to the frontier had been so intense, with a heavy flow of reinforcements from Moscow toward Smolensk and Minsk, that General Halder became anxious that the Russians might launch a preventive action. 'The disposition of Russian forces gives food for thought,' he wrote on April 7. 'If we discount the slogan that the Russians want peace and won't attack anybody themselves, then it has to be admitted that the Russian dispositions could allow them to go over very rapidly from defence into attack – and this could prove highly embarrassing for us.'

The Führer himself was in no doubt. At the end of it all, in 1945, he was to say, 'I didn't take the decision to attack Moscow lightly, but because I knew from certain information that an alliance was being prepared between Britain and Russia. The big question was, Should we hit out first or wait until we were overwhelmed at some time in the future?'

The naval attaché reported from Moscow that the Soviet naval construction programme was in the process of building three battleships, eleven cruisers, sixty-one destroyers, and nearly *three hundred* submarines; most of this fleet would be concentrated in the Baltic. After April 7, the German embassy in Moscow observed an increasing tide of conscription. On the eighth, the families of the Russian trade mission began leaving Berlin. On the twenty-third there were fresh reports from Bucharest of Soviet reinforcements massing in Bukovina and Bessarabia. The next day the German military attaché in Bucharest reported that Soviet troops were arriving at Odessa and being transported by rail to the Bug and Dniester. On the twenty-fifth the naval decoders intercepted a dispatch from the British military attaché in Moscow to the War Office in London: 'Our military attaché in Budapest,' this read, 'who was travelling to Moscow a few days ago, saw at Lemberg [Łvov] at least one tank brigade . . . on the railway line between Lemberg and Kiev heading westward; he passed seven troop trains of which four were conveying tanks and mechanised equipment and three troops.' The German attachés also saw many military transports heading west between Minsk and Baranovichi. By May 5, Antonescu was able to tip off the

* The 'Brandenburg' was the German commando regiment.

Germans that Soviet troops were massing between Kiev and Odessa and that reinforcements were still pouring westward from Siberia. 'The thing worth noting is that factories around Moscow have been ordered to transfer their equipment into the country's interior.'

A team of Göring's engineers had been allowed to tour eight or nine of the biggest Russian factories producing ball bearings, alloys, aircraft, and aero-engines, and to see the advances made by Soviet research. It was clear that the Soviet air force was a far greater menace than Hitler had bargained for. The aircraft factories were the biggest and most modern in Europe. When the German experts attended a dinner party, the leading Soviet aircraft designer, Mikoyan, stated explicitly, 'We shall valiantly ward off any attack, whatever quarter it comes from!'

On Red Army orders foreign diplomats were prevented from travelling freely. On May 13 a German consul in the heart of China reported that six days before Moscow had instructed all missions to ascertain the probable attitude of other countries in the event of a German-Soviet conflict. On the sixteenth the Russian envoy in Stockholm was reported to have stated that at no time in Russian history had more powerful troop contingents been massed in the west (which confirmed the estimate of the Swedish air attaché in Moscow that by mid-March alone 60 percent of the Red Army had been massed in western Russia, particularly confronting Romania).

Stalin's trainloads of rubber, ores, oil, and grain kept rolling westward to Hitler's Germany even as June 22, the date for 'Barbarossa,' approached; but the date on which Stalin secretly proposed to resume the Soviet programme of expansion, now temporarily halted by Hitler's obduracy, also came closer. On May 5, Stalin delivered two secret speeches at a Kremlin banquet to a thousand officers graduating from Moscow's staff colleges. Among the officials who passed through the Kremlin's Trinity Gate that evening were Molotov, Mikoyan, Voroshilov, Kalinin, and Lavrenti Beria; there were also two generals and one major who later fell into German hands and independently described the speeches to German interrogators with a high degree of unanimity.*

* These speeches by Stalin are mentioned in the Russian-language memoirs of Marshal Zhukov but not in the English and German editions. Ullstein, publisher of the German edition of *Hitler's War*, deleted every reference to these speeches. The speeches' contents have since been confirmed by historians working in the former Soviet archives.

Had Schulenburg – who heard merely that Stalin had delivered a forty-minute speech – been there, perhaps even his optimism about the Soviet Union's designs would have been dispelled. Stalin launched into a sober account of the need to prepare for war with Germany:

> New tank models, the Mark 1 and 3, are on their way; these are excellent tanks, whose armour can withstand 76-millimetre shells. In the near future there will also be a new tank graced with my own name. . . Our war plan is ready, we have built the airfields and landing grounds, and the front-line aircraft are already there. Everything has been done by way of clearing out the rear areas: all the foreign elements have been removed. It follows that over the next two months we can begin the fight with Germany. . . We have to take our revenge for Bulgaria and Finland.

The partisan movement painstakingly built up throughout Europe, Stalin continued, would assume a vast scale and would paralyse the German army's supplies. By the end of the first year Germany would have exhausted her limited stockpiles of scarce raw materials. 'Germany may be able to build aircraft and tanks, but she will lack the warriors themselves.' Stalin emphasised: 'There is no such thing as an invincible army, whatever the country of its allegiance.'

A lavish banquet followed, with drinking far into the night. One of the generals, the director of the famous Frunze military academy, was toasting Stalin's genius for 'preserving the peace' of Europe when Stalin irritably waved for him to stop, tottered to his feet, and delivered a second speech of his own.

> During the years of the capitalist encirclement of the Soviet Union we were able to make good use of the ['peaceloving'] slogan while we expanded the Soviet Union's frontiers to the north and west.
>
> But now we must discard this slogan for the reactionary and narrow-minded slogan that it is, as it will not serve to win us one more square inch of territory. It is time to stop chewing that particular cud, Comrade Chosin: stop being a simpleton! The era of forcible expansion has begun for the Soviet Union.

Raising his glass, Stalin announced a new and different toast: 'Long live the active policy of aggression of the Soviet nation!'

Hess and Bormann

'As a German and as a soldier I consider it beneath me ever to belittle a brave enemy,' exclaimed Hitler to his assembled Reichstag deputies on May 4, 1941. 'But it seems necessary to me to do something to protect the Truth from the boastful lies of a man who is as miserable a politician as he is a soldier, and is as wretched a soldier as he is a politician.' Hitler was declaiming on the Wehrmacht's fresh Balkan triumph. 'Just as he did after Norway and Dunkirk, Mr. Churchill – he also began this campaign – is trying to say something that he might yet be able to twist and distort into a British victory. . . Mr. Churchill may be able to lay down a smokescreen before his fellow-countrymen, but he cannot eliminate the results of his disasters.' Now the brave Greek people had paid for their pro-British monarch's folly. 'I regretted it from the start. For me as a German, born and bred to revere and respect the art and culture of this country whence the first rays of mortal beauty and dignity emerged, it was a hard and bitter experience to see this happening and be able to do nothing to prevent it.' From the French and British documents found in France, he said, he had realised how far the Greek government had drifted into Britain's arms.

Rudolf Hess sat between Hitler and Ribbentrop throughout this Reichstag speech. Ribbentrop said later that Hess's eyes looked completely abnormal all evening. Constitutionally 'Deputy Führer' of the Party since April 1933 and second in line of succession after Göring, Hess was an eccentric – just how eccentric we now know, from the recently recovered Gestapo interrogations of his private staff. *Kriminalrat* Franz Lutz, his detective, would describe in detail the plethora of doctors, therapists, dowsers, magnetopaths, hypnotists, and masseurs with a distaste evidently born of his boss's requirement that each of these dubious medical practitioners first test their

methods on his staff. Hess had been born in British Egypt and was unabashedly pro-British, a pacifist, and an idealist.

According to his secretary, Hess spoke privately with him at the end of this Reichstag speech, but merely inquired whether the Führer still stood by the programme he had set forth in *Mein Kampf* – of marching side by side with Britain. Hitler had nodded; he claimed to have attached no importance to this inquiry. Very shortly after the speech, at eight-fifteen that evening, May 4, 1941, he left Berlin by train for the dockyard at Gotenhafen, on the Baltic, to inspect Raeder's new ships, the *Bismarck* and the *Tirpitz*.

THE LATER Gestapo interrogations established that Hess's private audience with Hitler had occurred on May 3, the evening before the speech, and not on May 4; and they put a rather different slant on it. Hess's adjutant Günther Sorof related that on May 3 Hess had gone to Munich's Riem airport to fly up to Berlin by government plane, and that ten minutes before take-off Professor Karl Haushofer had come to speak with Hess; that Haushofer had thereafter asked the adjutant to stay behind and await a phone message from him to forward to Hess in Berlin; and that on that evening, May 3, Haushofer had phoned this message to Sorof to pass to the Deputy Führer: 'On a scale of 1 to 6, things stand at around 3 or 4, and more needs doing.' His son Albrecht, he added, would report as soon as he got back from Portugal. Pintsch, who had mistrusted the younger Haushofer as a 'spongy half-Jew' and wondered why Party headquarters allowed him to come and go the way he did, dutifully passed the cryptic message to Hess in Berlin.

Hess had arrived in Berlin at 5:20 P.M. on May 3. He had ordered his staff to bring his brand new Luftwaffe-Hauptmann's uniform with them, so he was certainly up to something. He knew that the younger Haushofer had left Germany to contact the anti-Churchill opposition.

'That evening,' confirmed his detective later to Gestapo interrogators, 'Comrade Hess was with the Führer.'

The adjutant Pintsch confirmed that, upon receiving this important phone message from Haushofer, Hess had taken it straight over to the Führer; he added, 'I believe it was from Portugal.'

After talking with Hess, Hitler now made a crucial alteration to the text of his next day's speech to the Reichstag – what that was, we do not know. Hess's staff had been aware for some weeks that he was toying with the idea of flying to Scotland. Detective Lutz, torn by uncertainty over whether to report this to Himmler, asked Pintsch next day, the fourth, whether Hess

had told the Führer of his intention. The adjutant replied that their boss had told him that yes, he had now spoken with the Führer about his plan. 'The Führer was not averse to it,' he had said.

THE LAST time that Hitler had seen *Tirpitz* was at her launching at Wilhelmshaven two years before; he still recalled the keen, honest features of the shipyard workers – 'A real aristocracy of the working class,' he reminisced. The two new battleships dominated the dockyard. The *Bismarck*, with her twenty-eight thousand miles of electrical circuits and her radar-controlled guns, was the most advanced warship afloat. Indeed, the navy considered her unsinkable, and Admiral Günther Lütjens, the gaunt-faced fleet commander, emphasised this word to Hitler in his cabin.

He reported on the brilliant marauding operation he had commanded with the battleships *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, raiding Atlantic convoys bringing war supplies to Britain from the United States. When Hitler voiced qualms at Lütjens's proposal to risk the capital ships very soon against the Atlantic convoys the admiral put his mind at rest. 'Mein Führer,' he said, 'there is nothing that can go wrong for me, with a ship like this. The only danger that I can see is torpedo-aircraft coming at us from aircraft carriers.'

Hitler returned to Berlin. He again commented unhappily to Dr. Goebbels on the ruin that Mr. Churchill was wreaking on the British empire, and on Italy's series of military reverses.

'Without them,' he remarked, scoffing at the Italians, 'Pétain would have stayed at our side, Franco might have joined us after all, and Gibraltar would be in our hands. Then Turkey would have been wide open to offers too.' It just did not bear thinking about, Goebbels lamented, recording these remarks in his diary, as Hitler continued south to Berchtesgaden – where he was to meet Darlan on May 11.

Briefly, Hitler turned his attention to Iraq. On April 2 a coup d'état had brought the anti-British lawyer-politician Rashid Ali al-Gailani to power; when the British thereupon landed in strength at the port of Basra on the Persian Gulf, Rashid Ali's small army encircled the British air base at Habbaniya some twenty-five miles west of Baghdad and fighting broke out. The Iraqis appealed to Germany for aid. German military experts were flown out, followed by a diminutive force of Messerschmitt and Heinkel aircraft, which Darlan allowed to land on the Vichy French airfields in Syria.

That Saturday evening, May 10, a bulky packet was delivered to the Berghof. Told it was from Hess, Hitler pushed it aside.

Toward noon the next day he was standing in the Berghof's Great Hall when there was a commotion. One of Hess's adjutants burst in. He handed Hitler a slim envelope. There were two pages inside. Hitler put on his eyeglasses and began to glance over them indifferently. Suddenly he slumped into a chair and bellowed in a voice that could be heard all over the house: 'Oh my God, my God! He has flown to Britain!' Hess's adjutant confirmed that his chief had taken off at Augsburg airfield at 5:40 P.M. the previous evening. Hitler rounded on Bodenschatz. 'How is it, Herr General, that the Luftwaffe let Hess fly although I forbade it? Get Göring here!' He now found that the bulky packet from Hess contained a long-winded account of his motives for flying and of his proposed peace plan, apparently written in October 1940. Hess promised not to betray 'Barbarossa' to the British.

Bodenschatz telephoned Göring at his castle Veldenstein, near Nuremberg. The Reichsmarschall petulantly asked *why* he was required at the Berghof. Hitler snatched the telephone, shouted, 'Göring – you are to come at once!' and slammed the instrument down. The Deputy Führer's adjutant, the bearer of the ill-tidings, was arrested and led away. A wave of hysterical speculation gripped the Berghof. '*Every possible* construction,' wrote Schmundt's wife in her diary. Hitler confided to Julius Schaub what he feared. 'If Hess really gets there just imagine: Churchill has Hess in his grasp! What lunacy on Hess's part. . . They will give Hess some drug or other to make him stand before a microphone and broadcast whatever Churchill wants.'

Bodenschatz began immediate technical inquiries. Perhaps Hess might have crashed en route, or run into foul weather?

Admiral Darlan – now Pétain's deputy premier, foreign minister, navy minister, and minister of the interior in one – arrived after lunch with Ribbentrop. But now that Hitler had decided on 'Barbarossa,' his interest in the Mediterranean had waned, and his inborn mistrust of the French was not easily overcome. In the Yugoslav files captured in Belgrade, a document had been found indicating that General Weygand was preparing to transfer his allegiance to De Gaulle. Canaris was to note at this time:

> When I turned to our Abwehr subversive operations in Syria and Iraq, the field marshal [Keitel] explained that the Führer is inclined to be sceptical about the French attitude over this issue, as he is indeed about their whole attitude toward collaborating with Germany. . . The chief of the OKW mentioned in passing a discussion on the subject of De Gaulle in

> the course of which the Führer interrupted Ribbentrop – who had uttered a derogatory remark about De Gaulle – with the words: 'Now, now, my dear Ribbentrop, if you found yourself in the same situation you would be the first to become a Gaullist!'

Since February Ribbentrop had seriously flirted with the notion of winning over France to collaboration – the French should place their fleet at the Axis disposal for the fight against Britain, and concede bases to Germany in French Africa. Hitler, however, remained sceptical and cool toward Darlan. A break for tea was taken at five-thirty, but Hewel noticed that the Führer's mind was elsewhere. Small wonder, Hitler's mind was on Hess.

The Reichsmarschall arrived at nine P.M. Hewel recorded that night: 'A long discussion with the Führer downstairs in the Hall: the Führer, foreign minister, Göring, Bormann. Very irritable. Much speculation.' Throughout this day and the next the argument raged back and forth as to whether Hess had arrived in Britain or was by now dead. 'A very upset day,' wrote Hewel on the twelfth. 'Göring and Udet believe Hess could not have managed the difficult flight to Glasgow. . . Führer thinks Hess *could* have pulled it off.'

It was Ribbentrop who sagely pointed out that if they waited any longer, the British might announce the news at any moment – indeed, they could claim that Hess had brought an *official* offer for a separate peace.

That would set the cat among the pigeons. Hitler was aghast. He ordered Ribbentrop to telephone reassurances to Ciano. The first investigations had meanwhile established that Hess had fallen under the sway of nature healers and astrologers. This facilitated the announcement that while Hess had evidently acted from idealistic motives he was in fact quite mad.

'The Führer decides to go ahead with the announcement,' wrote Hewel. 'He insists on including the passage about it being the action of a madman.'

By late afternoon the tenth redraft of the communiqué was complete; it was passed by Hitler and broadcast at eight P.M. In it the Party officially announced that Hess had taken off from Augsburg in an aircraft 'in a hallucinated state' and not been seen since. 'It is to be feared that Party-member Hess has crashed or met with an accident somewhere.'

Hitler, noted Hewel, was now 'somewhat less tense and more lively.' Hours passed and then the BBC finally stirred: Rudolf Hess had landed by parachute in Scotland two nights before. The tension at the Berghof relaxed; indeed a mood of hilarity took its place. 'Führer wants to wait until the morrow,' Hewel ended that day's momentous entries.

The Party had already begun an anguished investigation into the Deputy Führer's defection. On May 13 the Party circulated a second communiqué: papers left behind by Hess – who was more familiar with the Führer's genuine peace proposals than any other person – suggested that he suffered from the delusion that if he took some personal step, with Englishmen known to him from earlier times, he might yet manage to bring about an entente between Germany and Britain. In fact Hitler's anger was immense. Hans Frank – summoned post-haste to the Berghof along with all the other Party leaders and gauleiters, and who had been through many crises with Hitler as his personal lawyer – found him more upset than he had ever seen him 'since the death of his niece Geli Raubal.' In time, Hitler's anger softened. Schaub later wrote: 'In later years Hitler seldom mentioned Hess, but when he did it was always to emphasise how highly he had esteemed him – he had always been an upright and honest man until he was led astray.'

The Gestapo arrested the rest of Hess's private staff and questioned them. The dossier of interrogation reports, missing for over fifty years, surfaced in California in 1998. In January 1941, testified Günther Sorof, Hess had once casually asked him to find out whether the British 'General Hamilton' was still alive. He had already made one serious attempt to fly to Britain on January 10, taking off from Augsburg at three p.m. in the specially adapted Me-110. Before leaving the administration building for his solo adventure, Hess had asked for paper to write something, and after his departure the valet had handed to adjutant Pintsch a bulky envelope. As he read the contents Pintsch purpled, and announced that their chief had flown to England; but at that moment the control tower announced that the Me-110 was back and circling overhead. Hess had then had to use up ninety minutes' fuel before he could safely land. He explained that the rudder was faulty. Pintsch swore the others to secrecy. His conscience troubled, his detective Lutz had asked Pintsch if the Führer knew what was going on, as he would have to make some kind of report to Himmler. Two or three days later Pintsch replied that Hess had assured him that he was calling off the flights for the time being. There were no more visits to Augsburg until March.

Hess's staff had remained uneasy; his valet blurted out what he knew of their boss's plan to the startled adjutant Alfred Leitgen in mid-January and suggested they mention it to Martin Bormann; but nobody wanted to volunteer for this duty, as nobody was certain whether the Führer had ordered the secret mission or not. Lutz pressed Pintsch several times about this.

'Pintsch then told me,' Lutz told the Gestapo interrogators on May 18, 'that Comrade Hess had apparently talked with the Führer about such a plan while in Berlin [on May 3 – 4]. There was accordingly no need for me to report to the Reichsführer SS.' Lutz comfortably decided that Hess 'must have' informed the Führer of his plan.

It all hinged on that furtive meeting between Hitler and Hess on May 3, 1941 – just before the Reichstag speech, which Hitler had amended in one crucial passage on the strength of the message the younger Haushofer had brought from Portugal. Afterward Hess had directed Pintsch to have the Hitler speech printed in English, and he packed several copies of the translation, freshly printed in a very small typeface, into his luggage. Driver Lippert testified that a few hours after the Reichstag session on May 4 Hess ordered his surprised staff to get ready for an immediate rail trip down to Augsburg. A special sleeping-car was attached to the overnight Munich express and at five past ten P.M. Hess left Berlin. Over lunch in Munich the next day, on May 5, Hess had met the younger Haushofer at the Hotel Drei Mohren, obviously to weigh with him the latest message from Portugal. They spoke privately, and Hess had decided to fly to Scotland that same night. The Me-110 was tanked up, and at four P.M. Hess drove over to the Messerschmitt field at Augsburg. For the first time, he was wearing the new Luftwaffe uniform under his leather flying suit; he allowed Detective Lutz to take a roll of Leica snapshots of him in this unusual garb, in a room of the Messerschmitt building. When his driver asked about the uniform, Hess had told him not to breath a word about it. 'I'm planning a little surprise,' he explained to his staff. Taking a handful of the Hitler speeches, a picture of his baby boy, but no hand luggage in order to save weight, he climbed into the plane and took off at 5:15 P.M., heading north.

The flight was again a fiasco. An hour later his Me-110 reappeared over the airfield, circling to lose fuel; a radio fault had forced his return. On the drive back to Munich, his valet noticed that Hess was in a sour mood.

On the morning of May 10, Hess directed Pintsch to phone a meteorologist to get the cloud-base levels over Scotland; the adjutant then phoned the Reich air ministry and asked them to switch on a certain radio beacon, Elektra. Hess had meanwhile instructed his staff to keep their eyes open for a letter from his aunt in Zürich. Later that morning, May 10, a letter did arrive from her for Hess; she reminded him that he had phoned her to look out for a certain letter from the International Red Cross, but reported that none had yet come; by then however he had already left on his adventure.

This time, Hess forbade Lutz to take photos, saying it was a flying superstition not to be photographed before a long flight; he slung his own Leica camera around his neck. Pintsch handed him maps and the envelope containing the Hitler speeches, and at 5:42 P.M. the Me-110 took off, again heading north.

This time it did not reappear. At 9:45 P.M. Pintsch revealed to his colleagues: 'No phone calls have come, so Comrade Hess's flight must have succeeded.' He pulled out of his attaché case a package containing a route map – it ended somewhere in Scotland, where Hess intended to parachute into the Hamilton estate – and several letters, addressed either in Hess's handwriting or in typescript to the Führer, Himmler, a Messerschmitt director, and family members.

Deciding that it was too late to disturb the Führer with all this now, Pintsch waited overnight, then took the 7:35 A.M. slow train from Munich to Berchtesgaden. Upon leaving them, he told his colleagues that he hoped the Führer was not going to be too upset. This was the first alarming intimation that they had that Hitler might have been in the dark after all.

All of that was now history. There were many who believed that Martin Bormann was morally to blame for Hess's flight – that he had undermined Hess's position so much that the minister had felt compelled to undertake this drastic act to restore his faded status with Hitler.

When Göring asked Hitler whether he proposed to appoint Bormann as Hess's successor, the Führer shook his head and said that he had earmarked Bormann to succeed the Party treasurer Franz Xaver Schwarz; the Reichsmarschall replied succinctly that Hitler was wrong 'by a long shot' if he thought that that would slake Bormann's ambition. 'I care nothing about his ambition,' retorted Hitler. Bormann would continue as head of the Party chancellery; Göring was to look for a suitably youthful candidate to be 'Party minister.'

ON MAY 13, 1941, the Berghof was packed with the Party leaders and gauleiters. From four until six-thirty, Bormann and Hitler spoke to them about the Hess affair: it was now known, he said, that Hess had been 'manipulated' by various astrologers, mind-readers, and nature healers. Hewel later described the scene in his diary: 'Bormann reads out the letters left by Hess. A dramatic assembly, heavy with emotion. The Führer comes, speaks very humanly, analyses Hess's act for what it is, and proves he was deranged from his lack of logic: the idea of landing near a castle he has never seen and

whose owner, Hamilton, is not even there, etc.; and Hoare is in Madrid.* Then from foreign affairs standpoint, and finally the domestic repercussions. A deeply moving demonstration. Sympathy [from the gauleiters]: "Nothing is spared our Führer." Afterward, lengthy discussions.' Hewel concluded that the Führer was relieved that he no longer had a formal Deputy.

After he had finished speaking, Hitler leaned back on the big marble table, while the sixty or seventy gauleiters and others pressed around him in a silent semicircle. He caught sight of Gauleiter Ernst Bohle, the Bradford-born gauleiter of all Germans abroad, and asked him pointedly, 'Tell me what you knew of the affair.' Bohle guiltily replied that in October Rudolf Hess had sworn him to secrecy, and asked him to translate into English a letter he was writing to the Duke of Hamilton; on no account was he to tell Ribbentrop about it. At this point Hitler took Bohle aside, showed him the letters Hess had left, and asked him to point out paragraph by paragraph which passages had been in the letter Hess carried to the Duke of Hamilton. Shown the same letters, with their occultist claptrap, Goebbels swooned with rage: 'That's the kind of men we have ruling Germany,' he wrote. 'The whole business is explicable only in the light of his nature healing and herb-munching foibles.' Viktor Lutze agreed, warning Goebbels as they drove to the local airfield afterward that the public were bound to start asking how sick men could have held sway at the highest level of government.

Albrecht Haushofer, Hess's young fellow conspirator, joined Hess's two adjutants Pintsch and Leitgen in a concentration camp. Hitler intervened on behalf of Frau Ilse Hess, but Bormann, now all-powerful, had his own children Rudolf and Ilse rechristened, and ordered his former superior's name to be expunged from the history books. Woe betide those who fell foul of Hess's dynamic successor. Precisely one year later, on May 13, 1942, Party headquarters in Munich telephoned Bormann that the obstreperous Gauleiter Carl Röver of Oldenburg was going the way Hess had gone. Following visits by faith healers, and hallucinations, Röver had that day announced his intention of flying to see Churchill – after first calling at the

* Sir Samuel Hoare was ambassador in Madrid. Hess succeeded in navigating in the gathering darkness to within twelve miles of his target, had parachuted safely to earth (no mean feat for a man of forty-seven on his first attempt), and was actually in conversation with the Duke of Hamilton before daybreak. Hess stated that he had come as a *parlementaire*, unarmed and of his own free will. The letter that he carried has vanished – perhaps into Royal archives. Churchill ordered his incarceration for the rest of the war.

Führer's headquarters – 'as the whole world is mad.' By that afternoon Bormann's agents were already on their way to him, armed with '*top level*' instructions. Two days later Röver had died a timely death, Hitler could order a state funeral, and Goebbels could sigh in his diary: 'There goes one more member of the Old Guard.' Euthanasia had its uses.

ON MAY 12, 1941, Hitler formally replaced Hess's old 'Office of the Deputy Führer' with a Party chancellery headed by Bormann. Bormann now gathered powers the like of which Hess had never had, but Hitler begrudged this hard-working, unobtrusive, ruthless manager none of them. Secretary Christa Schroeder overheard him command Bormann: 'Just keep the gauleiters off my back!' And the forty-year-old Bormann – who in 1930 had founded the Party's financial fortunes by an insurance scheme under which millions of SA street-fighters had paid thirty pfennigs monthly and stuck stamps onto a yellow card – did just that. In alliance with the crafty constitutional expert Dr. Hans Lammers, Bormann established a civilian bottleneck through which all state affairs now had to pass on their way up to Hitler; Hitler's whim, no sooner spoken, was noted down by Bormann, elaborated by the lawyers on his staff, and circulated by Party channels and teleprinters almost instantly as a Führer Command. From now on Bormann increasingly ran the Reich while Hitler directed his war.

Bormann achieved that most dangerous of attributes – indispensability. Hitler ignored the man's boorishness: Bormann's one and only public speech, at a gauleiter conference, was a fiasco. Privately Hitler could never forgive him for what he and the Party had done to his Obersalzberg; the Berghof was ringed by more and more buildings and construction sites and bunkers. He even mentioned to Schaub that he was thinking of moving his permanent residence to Linz or Bayreuth because of this. Hitler also disagreed with Bormann's brutal approach to dealing with the Church and Jews. Yet Bormann survived until the end, dreaming of the day when he might step into the Führer's shoes. 'Bormann clung to him like ivy around the oak,' Robert Ley was to say, 'using him to get to the light, and to the very summit.'

FOR HITLER the Hess case was already closed; his eyes reverted to the east. The Second Air Force had already begun uprooting its ground organisation in the west; by the end of May only a large radio-deception organisation would remain to deceive the enemy. 'Barbarossa' was to be disguised as a

master deception plan: 'The closer the date of the attack approaches,' directed the OKW, 'the cruder will be the means of deception we can employ (in the Intelligence channels as well).' The airborne invasion of Crete was to be referred to openly as 'a dress rehearsal for the invasion of Britain,' and several ministries were instructed to start planning for the occupation of Britain immediately.

It was also time to start putting out cautious feelers to Russia's other bruised western neighbours. There were military reasons why Finland must be approached now. In view of Finland's casualties in her recent war with the Soviet Union no heavy burden would be foisted onto her; it would be left to her to decide how to meet the German requests. 'The course of this putative war will definitely be as follows,' Finland was to be told: 'After Russia has lost a certain area on account of the participation of many small nations (a crusade against Bolshevism) and in particular on account of the German Wehrmacht's superiority, she will be unable to fight on.' Hewel's diary of May 15 notes:

> After lunch the Chief [Ribbentrop] comes with [Dr. Julius] Schnurre up the mountain. Schnurre is given instructions on discussing Russian problem in Finland, and negotiating with [Risto] Ryti [the Finnish president]. He wants to return via Stockholm, but the Führer is very hostile toward Sweden. Says their ruling class is basically pro-British. If they did show any interest [in 'Barbarossa'] then it would only be so they could immediately report what they heard to Britain. . . Even the Reichsmarschall [Göring] has been cured of his infatuation for Sweden. Sweden would willingly sacrifice Finland if Germany lost the war. She is afraid of losing her dominant position in Scandinavia.

On May 19 Hitler was more relaxed, and even found words of approval for Italy. 'It is quite clear that the Duce is one of the greatest men in modern history,' he told Hewel. 'What he has extracted from the Italian people is quite marvellous. If he did not get any further, it was simply because he had reached the extreme limit of their capabilities. After him there will not be another with his energy and talents for a long time.'

On the following morning, May 20, as Göring's paratroops began their costly assault on the isle of Crete, Hitler drove down to Munich for two days in the quiet seclusion of his apartment there. Anxieties gnawed within him as he pored over the charts of Europe. Earlier in May he had feared the

British might invade Portugal or Spain: he briefly received the Spanish ambassador and warned him of the British activities in Morocco and told him of Abwehr reports on British plans to invade the Iberian peninsula.

Later in May, his anxieties concerned 'Barbarossa': was the eastern front not suspiciously quiet now? The OKW circulated to the operations staffs a succinct warning: 'The Führer again reminds you that over the coming weeks Russian preventive measures are possible.'

GRAND ADMIRAL Raeder came to see him on May 22. He casually mentioned that *Bismarck* and *Prinz Eugen* had just sailed for their first sweep into the North Atlantic. Hitler remembered all the premonitions that he had only half voiced in his private talk with Admiral Lütjens aboard the battleship at Gotenhafen. According to Hitler's naval adjutant, another factor in his anxiety was the wish to deprive Roosevelt of any justification for war – at any rate, as yet. He mentioned to Raeder Lütjens's own reservations about enemy torpedo-aircraft and asked Raeder outright, 'Herr Grossadmiral, can't we fetch the ships back?' Raeder advised him that enormous preparations had been made for this sortie; to recall the warships now would have a catastrophic effect on naval morale.

His policy of non-aggravation toward the United States did meantime bear fruit. The German admiralty grudgingly conceded that his policy thus far seemed justified, but the restrictions that he continued to impose on the hard-pressed U-boat crews in the North and South Atlantic irked nonetheless. They were not permitted to attack American warships or merchant ships, nor to board those suspected of carrying war goods to the enemy, nor to use their armament even if the Americans were flagrantly violating their neutrality – unless the Americans fired the first shot.

Hewel's diary of May 22 illustrates Hitler's dilemma over the United States:

> The Führer still vacillates in his attitude toward America, as 'you cannot peer into Roosevelt's mind.' If he wants a war, he will always find the means, even if legally we are in the right. *Japan* holds the key. Even though he has still not made his mind up it is better to keep the U.S.A. out of the war than perhaps to sink a few hundred thousand more tons of shipping. Without the U.S.A. the war will be over this year; with the U.S.A. it will go on for long years to come. A 'warning' is agreed on. . . Tea. Got a date for Cudahy.

John Cudahy, Roosevelt's former ambassador in Brussels, was brought up to the Berghof next afternoon to interview Hitler for the American press. Hitler's responses were short-tempered and impatient. Right at the start he tried to put out of his visitor's mind the 'ludicrous' notion that the Nazis might ever invade the Americas. This was just a wicked lie invented to convert American public opinion, said Hitler; indeed, he laughed out loud, dismissed it as a childish suggestion, and exclaimed, 'That is on a level with claiming that America plans to conquer the Moon!'

Mindful of the propaganda designed to distract attention from 'Barbarossa,' Hitler added that his OKW was not planning expeditions to the Moon but was busy with projects of rather shorter range – like Crete, at a range of sixty miles, or Britain at a range of only twenty. Hewel wrote afterward: 'Questions from another world, childish, like in the years of struggle twenty years ago. But positive. Cudahy deeply impressed.'

After Raeder's visit Hitler had been distracted by a domestic incident from following *Bismarck's* steady progress toward the Americas too closely. A drunken remark made by one of Dr. Goebbels's senior officials, Professor Karl Bömer, at a Bulgarian legation reception in mid-May threatened to betray the 'Barbarossa' operation. 'In four weeks the Russians'll be finished,' Bömer had said. 'Rosenberg's going to be Governor General of Russia.' From the intercepts that resulted, Hitler found out about the incident, and ordered an investigation. Hitler wanted Bömer's blood and ordered him tried by the People's Court. 'From now on I will take ruthless action against everybody who can't hold his tongue!'

Late on May 24, Raeder telephoned from Berlin with brilliant news.

Bismarck had stumbled on two British battleships sent to intercept her. She had dispatched *Hood* – Churchill's most powerful battlecruiser – in less than five minutes. The British battleship *Prince of Wales* had suffered heavy damage and turned away. There was bad news too: *Bismarck* herself had been hit twice and she was bleeding oil; her speed was reduced, and Admiral Lütjens could not shake off the pursuing enemy warships. Lütjens had suggested that Dönitz marshal all available submarines in one area through which he would try to lure the enemy, but next day he announced that his oil was so low that he must steer directly for Saint-Nazaire.

That evening Lütjens reported the first air strikes, so the British aircraft carrier *Ark Royal* was clearly now within range. At Hitler's Berghof, Hewel noted: 'Frightening hours on *Bismarck's* account.'

By noon of the twenty-fifth, Lütjens had at last managed to shake off his pursuers. But for how long?

Göring ordered his commanders to push out air cover as far as possible toward the limping battleship. Hitler grimly radioed Lütjens greetings on his birthday. The mood at the Berghof was further soured by the presence of Heydrich and Goebbels, both loudly wrangling over the Bömer affair.

When Hitler rose on the twenty-sixth the news awaiting him was that *Bismarck* had been found again by the enemy; shadowed by an enemy aircraft, she still had six hundred miles to go to Brest.

Soon after nine P.M. Lütjens radioed that the British aircraft had scored torpedo hits amidships and astern, and at 9:50 came the dread news that the battleship's steering was out of action: the unsinkable *Bismarck* was afloat and her guns were primed, but at best she could only steer a slow and stately circle while the British battle fleet closed in. Shortly before midnight, Lütjens radioed: 'Ship unmanoeuverable. We are fighting to the last shell. Long live the Führer!' To Hitler himself, he signalled: 'We shall fight to the end trusting in you, mein Führer, and with our faith in Germany's victory undestroyed.' Hitler instructed the admiralty to reply, 'All Germany is with you. What can be done shall be done. The way you do your duty will strengthen our nation in its fight for survival. Adolf Hitler.'

During the early hours of May 27 the Luftwaffe scoured the area. Ocean-going tugs put to sea. The Spanish government was asked to send out rescue ships. Lütjens's last radio message had come at 6:25 A.M. 'Position unchanged. Wind-strength 8 to 9.' From then onward there was silence. A funereal gloom descended over the Berghof.

At noon Hitler learned that the British government had announced the sinking of *Bismarck* an hour before.

Disabled and her last ammunition spent, *Bismarck* had scuttled herself under the guns of the British navy; she sank with her colours honourably flying and the loss of some twenty-one hundred lives. Hitler instructed that no battleship or cruiser was ever again to put to sea without his previous consent. Hewel wrote on May 27:

> Führer melancholy beyond words. Uncontrollable fury at the naval staff:
>
> 1. The ship should never have been sent out raiding;
> 2. After finishing off *Hood* she should have dealt with *Prince of Wales* too, and not run away;

3. She should have returned straight to Norway and not run straight into the lions' den.

Red tape and obstinacy in the navy. Won't tolerate any man with a mind of his own.

Reich foreign minister comes in the afternoon. Führer speaks his mind to him, swears and curses, and then calms down. A walk to the teahouse. The Führer picks up again, talks about new types of ships and the airborne torpedo as a weapon.

Raeder answered Hitler's criticisms soberly when he next came to the Berghof; he particularly emphasised that for *Bismarck* to have returned through the northern passages to Norway would have been more risky than continuing into the Atlantic. Hitler asked the admiralty to adopt a policy of conservation of strength until the effect of 'Barbarossa' on Britain was known. 'Should Britain's collapse threaten to become imminent, some very important duties might present themselves to our surface warships.'

Bismarck's loss had not been in vain. She had drawn off five battleships, two aircraft carriers, three battle cruisers, eleven cruisers, and twenty-one destroyers, which ensured the successful conclusion of the invasion of Crete; and the capture of Crete in turn reduced Britain's naval influence in the Mediterranean and paved the way for Rommel's triumphs in North Africa.

HITLER MEANWHILE had issued a belated OKW directive ordering support for the Arab 'liberation movement' against Britain. Jodl's chief assistant, General Walter Warlimont, had been sent to Paris for a week to resume the military talks broken off in December, and a protocol had been signed granting the French certain concessions in return for assistance in Syria and Iraq, as well as the future use of the Tunisian port of Bizerta to supply Rommel's troops in North Africa; more reluctantly, the French agreed on principle to let Hitler operate their port at Dakar as a submarine and Luftwaffe base on the west coast of Africa. They also secretly agreed to remove General Weygand from his command, though this was not specifically mentioned in the protocol. It was signed in Paris on the twenty-eighth, and the next day Warlimont flew to the Berghof to report.

Events in Iraq were overtaking Hitler, however. The British were already advancing on Baghdad, and the end could not be far off. He said: 'The Middle East by itself would have been no problem if our other plans' – meaning 'Barbarossa' – 'were not irrevocable. When they succeed, we can open a

door into the Middle East from there.' Mussolini was opposed to abandoning the Iraqi rebels and sent word to Hitler thus: 'I, Mussolini, am in favour of active support, as this is an opportunity to raise the entire population of the Middle East against Britain. But if Iraq collapses, they will all lose heart again. If the German High Command also decides on active support, then it seems to me necessary to occupy Cyprus as well – after the reduction of Crete and Rhodes – since it lies off the Syrian coastline and holds the key to the entire Middle East.'

Hitler's first reaction was an outburst: 'Mussolini thinks Cyprus should be taken now as well!' And Hewel recorded: 'The Führer proposes to agree, and to tell him to do it himself.' Hitler did nonetheless ask Göring and Jeschonnek whether Cyprus would be possible. The Reichsmarschall winced, reported on the blood the Luftwaffe had lost over Crete – 150 Junkers-52 transports alone – and advised against invading Cyprus. 'Since war broke out the Luftwaffe has known no rest,' said Göring. 'From Crete we shall now be fighting a pitched battle against the British fleet and Tobruk.'

Hewel made a lengthy record of Hitler's worried conference with Ribbentrop and the OKW generals on May 29:

> The point under debate is how far to bring in France or to get her involved in a war with Britain. . . The Führer curses the Italians. He hates the Spanish. Of Italy he says that you can't keep making concessions to somebody who is always running around with his backside black and blue from beatings, nor will the German people stand for it. . . The Führer's view is that when 'Barbarossa' is over, he won't need to pay any more attention to Italy! We shall then automatically be able to come together with the French. They are counting on kicking the Italians out of Tunisia after the war. He wants to have a talk with Mussolini shortly.

Later that day the foreign ministry's Dr. Schnurre briefed him fully on Finland and Sweden. The Finns had sent top generals to Germany to negotiate with the OKW and the General Staff; they were asked to prepare two divisions to support Hitler's operations from northern Norway against North Russia.

'"Barbarossa" is a gamble like everything else,' said Hitler to Hewel after Schnurre left. 'If it fails, then it will all be over anyway. If it succeeds, it will have created a situation that will probably force Britain to make peace. . . When the first shot is fired, the world will hold its breath.'

Pricking the Bubble

The dazzling heat of high summer had come to the Berghof. It was now early June 1941: the last echelon of assault troops had set out from Germany for the eastern front. In less than three weeks 'Barbarossa' would begin. It was time to start dropping hints to his prospective allies.

Hitler asked the Duce to join him at the Brenner Pass on June 2 and talked alone with him for two hours before the two dictators were joined by their foreign ministers. When at four o'clock the train set out again for Berchtesgaden, Hewel sat with the Führer. 'He is contented; says Mussolini is very confident and sure of victory. Has dropped a hint about Russia "if the shipping losses alone do not suffice"' – meaning suffice to knock Britain out of the war. He had also mentioned to Mussolini the possibility that David Lloyd George might succeed a defeated Churchill. 'Then we must see what possibility there is of settling our differences.'

To the Japanese ambassador, General Oshima, whom he urgently summoned to the Berghof the next day, Hitler put on the appropriate 'anti-British' act. After being lectured by Ribbentrop as well, Oshima cabled Matsuoka in strictest confidence. 'Both gentlemen gave me to understand that a German-Soviet war probably cannot be avoided.' Hitler bluntly stated that he would always be the first to draw his sword if he detected any hostility in an opponent, and although he did not expressly say so, his remarks to Oshima implied that while the Tripartite Pact was *expressis verbis* not intended as an instrument against the Soviet Union, such was the obligation on Japan – and he would expect the Japanese to honour it. Ribbentrop assured Oshima that the Russian campaign would be over in two or three months – he could not say when it would begin, but 'if Japan

should find it necessary to prepare for this eventuality, then he would advise her to do so in as short a time as possible.' On June 4, Hitler received King Boris of Bulgaria for two hours. Hewel took notes on the encounter, but they appear to have been lost.

The Finns confirmed to German officers sent to Helsinki that they were aware of the 'historic hour' that was dawning. Antonescu came to Munich and again offered to support the attack with all the military resources at Romania's disposal. The coalition was coming together well.

Meanwhile Hitler authorised orders to his Wehrmacht which were so shocking that Keitel later had all copies of them destroyed. All political commissars attached to Red Army units – identifiable as such by the red star embroidered with a golden hammer and sickle on their sleeves – were to be executed on capture. Evidently at Hitler's dictation Jodl drafted an explanation of the decision to liquidate these commissars. They in particular, he said, would subject German prisoners to spiteful, cruel, and inhuman treatment, for they were the 'originators of these barbaric Asiatic fighting methods.' Hitler ordered: 'If they are caught fighting or offering resistance, they are to be shot out of hand without exception and immediately.'

The role that the army General Staff, not to mention the German military lawyers, played in drafting these orders was less than glorious. Brauchitsch's staff had drafted two separate orders in weeks of tedious bureaucratic paperwork. The first was this 'commissar order,' and the second an order restricting the jurisdiction of courts-martial on Russian soil. Hitler had always been irked by the ponderous procedures of the army courts, believing that only speedy conviction and execution was a true deterrent. It was Halder, however, who proposed the clause reading: 'Immediate collective punishments will be enforced against towns and villages from which ambushes or treacherous attacks on the Wehrmacht are made, on the orders of an officer of not less than battalion commander's rank, if circumstances do not permit the rapid arrest of the individual perpetrators.' In the formal order issued by Keitel on Hitler's behalf in May, the Wehrmacht was instructed that offences against Russian civilians would *not* be punishable; and that francs-tireurs were to be wiped out in battle or 'trying to escape.'

To Hitler the Red Army was not an enemy to be handled with kid gloves. In a conference on June 5 he again warned his staff of the extensive use the Russians would make of tactics not sanctioned by international convention. Hitler anticipated that the Russians might, for example, contaminate their

lines of retreat with poison gases, or use poisonous additives to spike the food stocks and fresh-water supplies in the areas overrun by the Wehrmacht.

Hitler had recently taken to gathering his friends, his adjutants, and their wives about him in the evenings and rambling on endlessly about Christianity and the Roman Empire. On June 8, Hewel entered in his Berghof diary:

> Raining. The British are marching into Syria. A long conversation alone with the Führer about Russia. Says it will be a 'tough proposition' but he trusts in the Wehrmacht. Air force: numerical superiority in fighters and bombers. He is a bit frightened of air raids on Berlin and Vienna:
>
> 'The area we are to occupy will not be much bigger than from Denmark to Bordeaux in size. Russians have massed their entire strength on their western frontier, the biggest concentration in history. If "Barbarossa" goes wrong now, we are all lost anyway. As soon as that is all over, Iraq and Syria will take care of themselves. Then I will have a free hand, and I will be able to thrust on down through Turkey as well.
>
> 'If the French lose Syria – and I am convinced that Syria *is* lost – then there is only the one danger left, that they will lose Algeria as well. If that happens, I will thrust straight down through Spain at once and barricade the Mediterranean against the British. It is just this wretched waiting that makes one so nervous!'

A few days later the OKW asked the supreme commanders for their views on a draft directive for the period after 'Barbarossa.' Significantly, a contested invasion of Britain was not contemplated in this document.

On the eleventh, Hitler sent Schmundt to check if the headquarters being built for him near Rastenburg in East Prussia was ready.

Something akin to hysteria was overtaking Moscow as the realisation of Hitler's mobilisation dawned. On June 9 the German embassy in Moscow smuggled a naval officer into a Communist party indoctrination session at which a functionary delivered a violently anti-German talk, warning his audience to be on guard over the next few weeks. The speaker said that nobody in Moscow had expected Hitler to conquer the Balkans so rapidly; for Bolshevism, the advantage was that any war of attrition must lead to the annihilation of the middle classes.

The Soviet Union's interests would best be served by staying out – while the rest of Europe bled white in war.

Hitler arrived back in Berlin early on June 13 obsessed with the coming campaign. On that morning the police raided every newspaper outlet in the capital and seized the latest *Völkischer Beobachter;* but enough copies escaped seizure and reached foreign correspondents and the embassies for the impression to be conveyed that in Goebbels's leading article, 'E.g., Crete,' he had unwittingly betrayed that within two months Britain would be invaded. Goebbels was said to be in disgrace; but he was glimpsed the next day in Hitler's residence, cackling out loud over the success of his rumourmongering. Hitler assured him this new campaign would be all over in a month; Goebbels guessed rather less, writing: 'If ever an operation was a walkover then this is.'

ON JUNE 15, the Reich chancellery was packed with the Wehrmacht commanders for a top secret conference. Everybody was assigned different street entrances by which to arrive: Brauchitsch would arrive through the garden gate in Hermann-Göring-Strasse, Göring through Wilhelm Strasse, and the army group commanders through the New chancellery in Voss Strasse. After lunch, Hitler called for silence and spoke of his military reasons for attacking Russia. An unpublished note taken by a Luftwaffe general survives:

> *Hitler's after-luncheon speech.* The main enemy is still Britain. Britain will fight on as long as the fight has any purpose; this is typical of the British, as we have seen from their individual soldiers' conduct in Flanders, and it was demonstrated again by Dunkirk, by Greece, and by Crete. But Britain's fight only makes sense as long as they can hope that American aid will take effect and that they may find support on the continent. This explains why they have high hopes that the Russians will intervene and tie down the Germans, wearing down our war economy while the balance of power is tilted by American aid. At present this is very meagre; it will not become effective until the summer of 1942, assuming they have enough shipping tonnage to bring it over here; and the shipping losses are increasing.
>
> The proof of [Britain's] overtures to Russia is the complete uniformity in their press treatment of Cripps's journey.* Russia's attitude is

* The British ambassador, Sir Stafford Cripps, had left Moscow a week before to consult with the foreign office in London.

> perpetually obscure; she exploited every moment of political or military preoccupation elsewhere to raise immediate political demands. We can see this happening in Russia's intervention in the Polish campaign, and again against the Baltic states and Finland, and now in the Balkans (Bessarabia, and the treaty of friendship with Yugoslavia).
>
> Our attempt to 'clarify the position' met with the following objections from Molotov. First question, What does our guarantee to Romania mean and would we object to a Russian military mission? Second question concerning the Dardanelles, and the third about Finland.
>
> In other words continual efforts to muscle in somewhere. Since these efforts coincided chronologically with various temporary weaknesses in the German position, we would have to expect them to seize every chance they can in the future to act against Germany's interests. The Russian armed forces are strong enough to prevent us from demobilising soldiers and feeding them into the arms and consumer-goods industries so long as this latent Russian threat persists. Even if we made peace with Britain this would still be so.
>
> We want this conflict to come early, however; indeed it is absolutely vital if we are not to forfeit the favourable conditions that prevail. The bulk of the Russian forces are standing on the frontier, so we have a good chance of defeating them right there.

Hitler rounded off his speech with a warning against underestimating the Red Army. Afterwards he took Göring by the arm and soberly stated: 'Göring, it will be our toughest struggle yet – by far the toughest!'

Göring asked why, and Hitler replied, 'Because for the first time we shall be fighting an *ideological* enemy, and an ideological enemy of fanatical persistence at that.'

THE FAMILIAR bouts of insomnia began to assail him. By night he lay awake and asked himself what loopholes in his grand design the British might yet exploit. He sent Field Marshal Milch on an extended tour of Germany's air raid defences; suspecting that his successful paratroop operation against Crete might stimulate the British to undertake similar ventures against the Channel Islands as soon as his hands were tied in Russia, he had ordered the island garrisons increased and extensively reinforced – the more so as he intended to keep Guernsey and Jersey in German hands after the final peace treaty with Britain.

On June 18, with the newspapers of every country but Germany openly asking when Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union would begin, the Soviet ambassador in Berlin asked for an interview. Hewel, at Hitler's chancellery, wrote an agitated note in his diary: 'Big problem: [Vladimir] Dekanozov has announced he is to see the state secretary [Weizsäcker]. What is he bringing? Is Stalin going to bring off a major coup even now? A big offer to us, etc. etc.? [Führer has] a long discussion with foreign minister; Engel [Hitler's army adjutant] and myself going over every possible angle. The Führer and foreign minister will have to vanish – so they can't be reached. Much plotting: Sonnenburg, Carinhall, or Berghof; the train; Wildpark.* Then one day lying low in the Reich chancellery.' Hewel concluded the entry as follows: 'These last days before an operation are the most nerve-racking.'

The next evening, as Hitler was in the middle of dictating his 'Barbarossa' proclamation – 'To the Troops of the Eastern Front!' – Ribbentrop telephoned to report that Dekanozov had discussed purely routine affairs, and had left after cracking a few jokes.

Hitler's proclamation was a *tour d'horizon* of Germany's foreign policy since the war began; but in its four closely printed pages there were some lines worthy of attention. Here Hitler claimed that the German people had never wished ill to the inhabitants of Russia. 'But for two decades the Jewish-Bolshevik rulers of Moscow have endeavoured to set not only Germany but all Europe alight.' He said too that he had never tried to export the Nazi ideology to Russia the way that the Kremlin had tried to subvert the rest of Europe to communism. In a cynical oversimplification, Hitler reminded his troops: 'You, my soldiers, know for yourselves that until a very few weeks ago there was not one German panzer or mechanised division on our eastern frontier.' The historic proclamation ended:

> At this moment, soldiers of the eastern front, an assembly of strength the like of which in size and scale the world has never seen is now complete. In league with Finnish divisions, our comrades are standing with the Victor of Narvik [Dietl] on the shores of the Arctic in the north. German soldiers under the command of the Conqueror of Norway [Falkenhorst], and the Finnish heroes of freedom under their own Mar-

* Sonnenburg was Ribbentrop's country home; Carinhall was Göring's. Wildpark was the site of the Luftwaffe headquarters outside Potsdam – now a secret NATO headquarters.

shal [Mannerheim] are protecting Finland. On the eastern front stand you. In Romania, on the banks of the Prut, and along the Danube right down to the beaches of the Black Sea are German and Romanian troops united under Antonescu, the head of state. When this, the greatest front line in history, now begins its advance it will do so not just to provide the means of ending this great war for all time, or to defend those countries currently involved, but for the salvation of our entire European civilisation and culture.

German soldiers! You are thus entering upon a harsh and demanding fight – because the fate of Europe, the future of the German Reich, the existence of our nation now rest on your hands alone.

May the Lord God help us all in this struggle.

Hewel wrote: 'A long conversation with the Führer. . . Wishes he were ten weeks on from now. After all there must always be a big element of risk. We are standing outside a locked door. [Will we run into] secret weapons? The tenacity of the fanatic? He now has to take sleeping pills to fall asleep. He is still dictating. He told me that this morning [June 20] he again pored over every minute detail, but found no possibility for the enemy to get the better of Germany. He thinks Britain will have to give in – and he hopes it will be before the year is over.'

As recently as September 1940 the propaganda ministry had learned that Hitler had given the go-ahead for the Madagascar Plan, under which about three and a half million of the four million Jews currently living within his domain would be shipped to that island in the Indian Ocean a year or two after the war ended. Since that summer his experts had been studying the possibility of resettling Europe's ten million Jews on this large island, a French colony. Madagascar was over twice as big as Britain; its pre-war population was four million.

He did not want the Jews to remain in their present settlement region around Lublin, as historical experience showed that they would raise the danger of epidemics. On October 2, 1940, he had discussed this with Hans Frank and Baldur von Schirach, gauleiter of Vienna. Schirach had pointed out that his fifty thousand Viennese Jews were due for deportation to Poland; Frank had protested that he could not accommodate any fresh influx. At first Hitler had overridden his objections, but then the Madagascar Solution had come under consideration. On June 2, 1941, Hitler told Mussolini:

'The island could find room for fifteen million people.' The problem with this plan, he told Bormann, was how to transport the Jews that far in wartime. 'I should dearly like to devote my entire fleet of *Kraft durch Freude* (strength through joy) ocean liners* to it,' he said, 'but I don't want my German crews being sunk by enemy torpedoes.' In private – to Keitel, Bormann, and Speer – Hitler described it as his ultimate ambition to eliminate all Jewish influence throughout the Axis domains. Their presence still caused countless bureaucratic vexations. On June 7, 1941 Dr. Hans Lammers wrote to Bormann: 'The main reason why the Führer has not approved the ruling proposed by the Ministry of the Interior is that in his opinion there won't be any Jews left in Germany after the war anyway.'

The coming occupation of new territories in the east suggested to Hitler an alternative solution of the 'Jewish problem.' As 'Operation Barbarossa' approached, it suggested itself to him that the new eastern empire would enable him to overcome Hans Frank's loud objections to the dumping of Jews on his Generalgouvernement territory and Himmler's growing influence there. Three days before the Wehrmacht attacked Russia, Hitler announced this explicitly to Frank; and the latter accordingly briefed his staff that no fresh ghettos were to be established, 'since the Führer expressly stated to me on June 19 that in due course the Jews will be removed from the Generalgouvernement – and that the Generalgouvernement is to be, so to speak, only a transit camp.' In the view of Dr. Goebbels, who sat in on these discussions on June 19, this deportation to the east would be a 'fitting punishment' for these troublemakers – and one which the Führer himself had actually prophesied to them.

Seven months later, the Madagascar plan died a natural death. A foreign ministry official would write: 'The war against the Soviet Union has meanwhile made it possible to provide other territories for the final solution. Accordingly, the Führer has decided that the Jews are not to be deported to Madagascar but to the east.'

TWO DAYS remained, and Russia was still an enigma behind a sealed door. During a coffee break snatched with his female secretaries in their 'stair cupboard' in the chancellery, Hitler noted that there was something sinister about the Soviet Union – it reminded him of the ghost ship in *The Flying*

* Pleasure liners built for the mass German labour union, the DAF.

Dutchman. 'We know absolutely nothing about Russia,' he said. 'It might be one big soap-bubble, but it might just as well turn out to be very different.'

At nine P.M. on Friday, June 20, Colonel Schmundt, his Wehrmacht adjutant, brought news from the admiralty. A German submarine had proudly reported attacking the U.S. battleship *Texas*, since it was encountered ten miles within the North Atlantic blockade zone proclaimed by Germany. As recently as June 6, Hitler had reiterated to Admiral Raeder why he wanted to avoid incidents with the United States. Raeder now argued that the U-boat had acted correctly, but proposed forbidding attacks on U.S. ships up to twenty miles inside the blockade zone. Hitler at first agreed, but during the night he had second thoughts and telephoned the admiralty that there must be no incidents whatsoever involving the United States until the outcome of 'Barbarossa' was clear. The same order was issued to the Luftwaffe.

Less than twelve hours remained before the attack. He summoned Goebbels, and paced the long chancellery drawing room with him for three hours, examining from every angle the risks involved in 'Barbarossa' and pondering on Britain's future – why for instance was Mr. Churchill still systematically playing down Hess and his peace mission? The foreign ministry telephoned that the Soviet ambassador was again urgently demanding to see Ribbentrop. Dekanozov was fobbed off with word that Ribbentrop was away until evening and that an appointment would be made on his return. In fact he was at the chancellery, and paid several visits to Hitler. He cabled orders to Ambassador Schulenburg in Moscow to destroy the embassy's code books and to seek an immediate interview with Molotov; at this he was to read out a long rigmarole ending with the words 'The Führer has therefore ordered the German Wehrmacht to confront this menace with all the means of force at its disposal.'

At nine-thirty, Dekanozov was allowed to see Baron von Weizsäcker. To general relief, he was only delivering a formal Soviet Union complaint about repeated German violations of her air space. The parallel complaint delivered simultaneously to Schulenburg in Moscow evoked much hilarity when it arrived in Hitler's chancellery in the small hours of the morning: 'A series of symptoms gives us the impression that the German government is dissatisfied with the Soviet government . . .,' grumbled Molotov.

Hitler saw Goebbels off the premises at two-thirty A.M.: it was now June 22, 1941, the anniversary of Napoleon's attack on Russia. 'He has been working on this since July,' Goebbels observed in his diary. 'And now the hour has struck.' One hour later, along a frontier extending from the

Arctic Ocean to the Black Sea, three million German and coalition troops attacked Stalin's empire. Surprise was complete. Hitler briefly retired to bed, remarking to his adjutants, 'Before three months have passed, we shall witness a collapse in Russia the like of which world history has never seen!'

What Hewel described as a 'tranquil, self-possessed mood' descended on the chancellery during the morning. It was like any other Sunday, except that Hitler and Ribbentrop fell fast asleep after lunch. Hitler's adjutants, wilting under the Central European sun, went swimming. Italy had honoured her obligations with notable speed, cabling at three P.M. that she regarded herself as being at war with Russia. Romanian troops had crossed the Prut and were fighting in the provinces invaded by Russia twelve months before. Madrid telephoned that a volunteer legion was being recruited to join the crusade. An ecstatic Admiral Horthy exulted to the German ambassador in Budapest that he had dreamed of this day for twenty-two years – mankind would thank Hitler for centuries to come. He broke off diplomatic relations with Moscow, but this was as far as he would as yet go. At six P.M. a disappointed General Jodl telephoned his liaison officer in Budapest; but Horthy had gone off to play polo, his Chief of Army Staff was 'unavailable,' and the defence minister had gone fishing. Just as Hitler expected, the Hungarians, canny as ever, wanted to see the first results of 'Barbarossa.'

The bulk of the Russians' forward air force had been smashed on the ground on this first day – over twelve hundred Soviet aircraft had been destroyed. On June 23 Hewel wrote: '11:30 A.M. . . the Führer is in a brilliant mood on account of the huge successes in Russia (Luftwaffe).'

As so often before, Hitler and his staff drove through the sun-drenched streets of Berlin to his special train. At half-past noon he left for East Prussia – the twin locomotives hauling him through those fields and cities so recently 'liberated' from the Poles. Over tea he reminisced with Hewel and the others. 'Russia,' he conceded at one point, 'is still a big question mark.'

Long after midnight he was in a column of automobiles, being driven past cordons of sentries guarding a wood about ten miles outside Rastenburg, deep inside which was his new headquarters. During the train journey he had decided to call it the Wolf's Lair (*Wolfsschanze*).

'Why Wolf again,' asked Christa Schroeder, 'just like the other HQs?'

Hitler replied, 'That was my code name in the Years of Struggle.'

It was one-thirty A.M. as he set foot inside the forbidding compound. From here he planned to command the defeat of the Soviet Union.

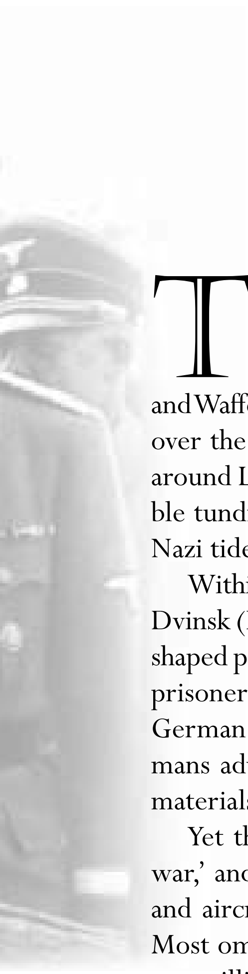
Part v: Crusade into Russia

RIENZI: *Herr Kardinal, bedenkt, was Ihr verlangt!*
Kann stets ich auf die heil'ge Kirche baun?
RAIMONDO: *Halt fest im Aug' das Ziel, und jedes Mittel,*
erreichst du jenes sicher, sei geheiligt!
RICHARD WAGNER'S OPERA *Rienzi*



Found in a private photo album belonging to the Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler: A snapshot entitled 'Visit to a Jewish peasant woman, Lublin, August 21, 1941.' In the centre is his adjutant Joachim Peiper and, grinning in the rear, his liaison officer to Hitler, SS Gruppenführer Karl Wolff (AUTHOR'S COLLECTION)

The Country Poacher



Thus Adolf Hitler set out, aged fifty-two, to conquer the empire of Joseph Stalin.

In a terrible, unceasing onslaught his grey legions of Wehrmacht and Waffen SS troops fought forward across the drab and wind-swept plains, over the glowing yellow fields of Ukrainian sunflower crops, the swamps around Lake Ilmen, the barren steppe, and the rocky deserts and inhospitable tundra, humming with myriads of unseen mosquitoes, until the spent Nazi tide finally lapped the Caucasus Mountains.

Within a few days Field Marshal Leeb's armoured spearheads had reached Dvinsk (Daugavpils); Field Marshal Bock's tanks were encircling a long oval-shaped pocket from Bialystok to Minsk in which eventually 350,000 Russian prisoners would be taken. Within a month Smolensk itself would be in German hands and Rundstedt would be at the gates of Kiev. As the Germans advanced, they found Russian trains still laden with grain and raw materials destined for Germany.

Yet there were disturbing auguries. Stalin had proclaimed a 'patriotic war,' and this was a slogan of dangerous magnetism. Moreover, his tanks and aircraft were significantly more plentiful than Hitler had been told. Most ominous of all was the frightening tenacity of the Soviet soldier. He was willing to die; he was brave and dogged. Frederick the Great once said, 'You've got to shoot every Russian dead twice, and still turn him over to make sure.' Chief of Staff Halder wrote on July 16, 1941: 'The Russians drive their men forward into counterattacks without the least artillery support, as many as twelve waves one after another; often they are raw recruits, who just link arms and – their muskets on their backs – charge our machine guns, driven by their terror of the commissars and their superiors.

Sheer weight of numbers has always been Russia's *forte*, and now the Russian command is forcing us to slay them, because stand aside they won't.'

A more fundamental obstacle to the invasion was the nature of the Russian terrain. Hitler had been undaunted by the distances involved, since unlike Napoleon he had the internal combustion engine and the airplane. In the months to come however he was to learn that horses did have certain advantages over mechanical transport. As General Guderian would write on the last day of October 1941: 'You might say that we're no longer fighting against the Russians but against the weather and the bottomless and uncultivated land; and this is a very tough fight indeed, costly in both men and time.'

The whole campaign was a gamble. Hitler was attacking Russia with only ten or fifteen divisions in reserve. Each day brought fresh revelations. When Ribbentrop came on June 27, Hitler exclaimed that he now felt like the horseman who having unwittingly ridden across the frozen Lake Constance died of horror when he learned what he had done: 'If I had had the slightest inkling of this gigantic Red Army assemblage I would never have taken the decision to attack.' But the gamble seemed to have come off. On the very next day Joseph Stalin is now known to have dictated a secret memorandum recommending that they contact the departing German ambassador at once, to sue for peace and offer Hitler a new 'Brest-Litovsk,' formally recognising Germany's claim to the Baltic states and the Ukraine.

The Ukrainians warmly greeted Hitler's invading troops, as Guderian wrote in a private letter on June 29: 'Today there is a Thanksgiving service in the local Orthodox churches, as we are regarded as liberators. I hope they don't get let down.' Two days later he added, 'The first Russian villages – we were in Poland until now – make a pretty dismal impression. The inhabitants, White Ruthenians, are friendly enough and don't care much if the Soviets collapse. But there are some who think differently, especially among the troops, and they're putting up a stiff and courageous fight.'

HITLER'S 'WOLF'S Lair' was just outside Rastenburg in East Prussia. The cluster of wooden barracks and single-story concrete blockhouses was invisible from the air, concealed by camouflage netting suspended from the treetops. A few hundred yards away, on the other side of the road, Jodl's operations staff occupied a similar encampment. Hitler predicted that 'this whole headquarters will one day become a historic monument, because here is where we founded a New World Order'; Jodl dryly replied that it

would be better suited as a garrison detention centre for Rastenburg. It had in fact been built in one of the marshiest places in Masuria. 'No doubt some government department found the land was cheapest here,' sighed Hitler. Jodl's staff diarist complained in a private letter dated June 27: 'We are being plagued by the most awful mosquitoes. It would be hard to pick on a more senseless site than this – deciduous forest with marshy pools, sandy ground, and stagnant lakes, ideal for these loathsome creatures.'

Secretary Christa Schroeder wrote a worm's-eye view:

> The blockhouses are scattered in the woods, grouped according to the work we do. Our sleeping bunker, as big as a railway compartment, is very comfortable-looking, panelled with a beautiful light-coloured wood; . . . As the air-conditioning noise bothered us . . . we have it switched off at night with the result that . . . we walk around with leaden limbs all next day.
>
> Despite all this it is wonderful except for an appalling plague of mosquitoes. The men are better protected by their long leather boots and thick uniforms; their only vulnerable point is the neck. Some of them go around all day with mosquito nets on. Wherever a mosquito turns up, it is hunted down. In the first few days this led to immediate problems of jurisdiction, as the Chief [Hitler] says it should be the Luftwaffe's job only. They say the small mosquitoes are replaced by a far more unpleasant sort at the end of June. God help us!
>
> It is almost too cool indoors. . . The forest keeps out the heat: you don't notice how much until you go out into the street, where the heat clamps down on you.
>
> Shortly after ten A.M. we two [Gerda Daranowski and I] go to the canteen bunker – a long whitewashed room sunk half-underground, so that the small gauze-covered windows are very high up. A table for twenty people takes up the entire length of the room; here the Chief takes his lunch and supper with his generals, his General Staff officers, adjutants, and doctors.
>
> At breakfast and afternoon coffee we two girls are also there. The Chief sits facing the maps of Russia hanging on the opposite wall.
>
> Now he makes a clean breast of his apprehensions, again and again emphasising the enormous danger Bolshevism is for Europe and saying that if he had waited just one more year it would probably have been too late. . .

We wait in this No. 1 Dining Room each morning until the Chief arrives for breakfast from the map room, where meantime he has been briefed on the war situation. Breakfast for him, I might add, is just a glass of milk and a mashed apple: somewhat modest and unpretentious.

Afterward we go at one P.M. to the general situation conference in the map room. . . The statistics on enemy aircraft and tanks destroyed are announced – the Russians seem to have enormous numbers, as we have already annihilated over 3,500 aircraft and over 1,000 tanks including some heavy ones, forty-tonners.

They have been told to fight to the end and to shoot themselves if need be. For example, at Kovno (Kaunas) this happened: our troops sent a Russian prisoner into a Russian bunker to tell the Russians there to surrender, but he seems to have been shot himself by the commissar in there. Then the entire bunker was blown up by its own occupants. In other words, perish rather than surrender. There is a GPU commissar attached to each unit, and the commanding officer has to bow to him. Away from their leadership, the troops are just a rabble; they are absolutely primitive, but they fight doggedly on – which is of course a danger of its own and will lead to many a hard struggle yet. The French, Belgians, and so on were intelligent and gave up the fight when they saw it was pointless, but the Russians fight on like lunatics, trembling with fear that something will happen to their families if they surrender.

If there is nothing important to be done, we sleep a few hours after lunch so we are bright and breezy for the rest of the day, which usually drags on till the cows come home.

Then, around five P.M., we are summoned to the Chief and plied with cakes by him. The one who grabs the most cakes gets his commendation! This coffee break most often goes on to seven P.M., frequently even longer. Then we walk back to No. 2 Dining Room for supper. Finally we lie low in the vicinity until the Chief summons us to his study where there is a small get-together with coffee and cakes again in his more intimate circle. . . I often feel so feckless and superfluous here. If I consider what I actually do all day, the shattering answer is: absolutely nothing. We sleep, eat, drink, and let people talk to us, if we are too lazy to talk ourselves. . .

This morning the Chief said that if ever the German soldier deserved laurels it was for this campaign. Everything is going far, far better than he hoped. There have been many strokes of good fortune, for example, that the Russians met us on the frontier and did not first lure us far into

> their hinterland with all the enormous transport and supply problems that would certainly have involved. And again, that they did not manage to destroy their two bridges at Dvinsk. I believe that once we have occupied Minsk our advance will surge forward. If there are any isolated Communists left among our own ranks, they will definitely be converted when they see the 'blessings' of life on the other side. . .

By June 30 the encirclement of Minsk was completed. Army Group Centre had captured 290,000 prisoners, 2,500 tanks, and 1,400 guns. Halder reflected the optimism at General Staff headquarters when he boasted on July 3: 'It's probably not overstating the case if I maintain that the campaign in Russia has been won in two weeks. Of course that doesn't mean it's *over*.' In a private letter on June 29, Jodl's war diarist showed that the OKW agreed that things were going better than expected. 'With the capture of Dvinsk and Minsk we have covered in one week one third of the way to Leningrad and Moscow; at this rate we would be in both cities in another fourteen days – but we can assume it'll be even sooner.' Hitler shared this view. Looking at the wall map in his dining room, he proclaimed to his secretaries, 'In a few weeks we'll be in Moscow. Then I'll raze it to the ground and build a reservoir there. The name Moscow must be expunged.'

Hitler had every reason to scent victory throughout July 1941. On July 2 he was shown a decoded Turkish report quoting both Stalin and Marshal Timoshenko as privately conceding to foreign diplomats that they had already written off Leningrad, Minsk, Kiev, and even Moscow. A decoded morale report from the American embassy in Moscow described air raid precautions there and anxiously noted the food situation and rumours that the Russians were already evacuating their Gold reserves to safety.

Over lunch with Ribbentrop on July 4, Hitler was already enlarging on his plans for colonising Russia. The next day, with the Russian campaign seemingly drawing to a close, Hitler explained to the same select lunchtime audience why he had attacked Russia without a formal declaration of war or even the pretext of an 'incident.' 'Nobody is ever asked about his motives at the bar of history. Why did Alexander invade India? Why did the Romans fight their Punic wars, or Frederick II his second Silesian campaign? In history it is success alone that counts.' He, Hitler, was answerable only to his people. 'To sacrifice hundreds of thousands [of troops] just because of the theoretical responsibility-issue [for starting the war] would be criminal. I will go down in history as the destroyer of Bolshevism, regard-

less of whether there was a frontier incident or not. Only the result is judged. If I lose, I shall not be able to talk my way out with questions of protocol.'

Hitler calculated that it would take until August to assemble his infantry for an attack on Moscow. Meanwhile, his tank formations could 'mop up' in the north. He was noticeably uncertain about how high to rank Moscow itself on his list of objectives; to him it was just a place-name, he said, while Leningrad was the very citadel of Bolshevism, the city from which that evil creed had first sprung in 1917.

By this time the coalition was complete: Slovakia had declared war on June 23; Hungary and Finland had decorously waited a few more days, until Russian aircraft attacked them, then they too declared war.

The Vichy French government broke off diplomatic relations with the USSR, and thousands of Frenchmen responded to the Nazi call for volunteers to fight Bolshevism: 150 airmen also volunteered, among them 20 of France's foremost bomber pilots. From Denmark, Norway, Spain, France, Belgium, and Croatia came word of legions being formed to fight in Russia.

Hitler directed that those from 'Germanic' countries were to be organised by the SS, while the Wehrmacht would attend to the rest. All must swear allegiance to him. Sweden and Switzerland remained the exceptions – 'Nations on Furlough,' as Hitler contemptuously called them.

As he had prophesied, the battle against Bolshevism was proving a rallying point for all Europe. On July 10 Hewel observed of Hitler: 'He predicted it. "I was forced into this fight step by step, but Germany will emerge from it as the greatest national Power on earth." He believes that Churchill will topple all at once, quite suddenly. Then in Britain an immense anti-Americanism will arise, and Britain will be the first country to join the ranks of Europe in the fight against America.' And Hewel added jubilantly: 'He is infinitely confident of victory. The tasks confronting him today are as nothing, he says, compared with those in the years of struggle: particularly since ours is the biggest and finest army in the world.'

The Vatican also let it be known that they 'welcomed the war' with Russia. That Churchill had broadcast his offer of aid to Russia on the first day of 'Barbarossa' did not surprise Hitler. In private he mocked the strange spectacle of 'Churchill, Stalin, and Roosevelt as fighters for freedom!'

Confident of victory, on July 8, 1941 Hitler instructed Brauchitsch not to send any new tanks to the eastern front; the panzer divisions there were to

be reduced in number, and idle tank crews were to be sent back to Germany to train fresh tank divisions. On the thirteenth, he confirmed this in an OKW order: in addition to the twenty existing panzer divisions, the army was to establish by May 1, 1942 twelve more for the east and twenty-four for other tasks. The next day, Hitler ruled that after the Soviet Union's defeat, the Luftwaffe was to be expanded on a colossal scale.

Of his real future aims at this time we are only meagrely informed. Hitler seems to have envisaged a future war – perhaps not in his lifetime – between the New World and the Old. Later in July, gossiping one night about the Englishman's innate sense of authority, he remarked, 'I'm sure the end of this war's going to mark the start of a lasting friendship with Britain. But if we're to live in peace with her, we shall have to give her a knockout blow first – the British expect that from anybody, if they are to respect him properly.'

On July 15 Jeschonnek's deputy, touring the conquered territories, wrote in his diary: 'The Red Army's equipment staggers us again and again. . . They had laid out enormous fortifications, mostly still incomplete, to guard their Lemberg salient. In this region, sixty-three huge airfields alone, each with two runways and all still incomplete, bear witness to the Russian attack preparations.' The next day Stalin's son Jacob, a lieutenant in a Soviet tank division, was captured near Vitebsk. Among 'other proof that the Russians were just waiting to get at the Germans' was, according to the Luftwaffe's General Wolfram von Richthofen, the huge number of artillery and tanks captured at Dobromysl. 'In part they come from the young Stalin's tank division. He has admitted that they were standing by for the big offensive.' Hitler learned that a letter had been found on Jacob Stalin from a friend, mentioning that before their 'outing to Berlin' he was going to see his Anushka one more time. Interrogation of Stalin junior and the dictator's former secretary, also captured, revealed that Stalin planned to exploit the German intelligentsia to boost the Russian population's calibre; Europe and Asia would then become the invincible bastions of Bolshevism.

Hitler was particularly awed by the new Soviet armoured fighting vehicles. They crawled out of the forests like primæval monsters of whose existence his experts had breathed no word to him: here was one tank of fifty-two tons, its armourplate so thick that only the Luftwaffe's 88-millimetre anti-aircraft guns made any impression on it; and here, south of Dubno, were others, weighing a hundred tons. On July 4, OKW war diarist Helmut Greiner confidently asserted: 'The Russians have lost so many

aircraft and four thousand six hundred tanks that there can't be many left.' By mid-July however Hitler's gunners had knocked out eight thousand Russian tanks and still they came. At the end of July *twelve thousand* tanks had been captured or destroyed. Visiting Army Group Centre on August 4, Hitler admitted to his panzer commander General Guderian: 'Had I known they had as many tanks as that, I'd have thought twice before invading.'

An Abwehr colonel apprehensively recorded on July 20: 'C[anaris] has just returned from the Führer's headquarters and describes the mood there as very jittery, as it is increasingly evident that the Russian campaign is not "going by the book." The signs are multiplying that this war will not bring about the expected internal collapse, so much as the invigoration of Bolshevism. C. warns in particular that attempts are being made to brand the Abwehr as the culprits, for not properly informing people about the true strength and fighting power of the Russian army. For example the Führer is said to have remarked that had he known of the existence of the super-heavy Russian tanks he would not have waged this war.' OKW war diarist Greiner wrote privately the next day: 'Nobody discussed this at lunch with the Führer yesterday. At first he was very taciturn, and just brooded. . . Then he came to life and delivered a monologue of an hour or more on our brave and gallant Italian allies and the worries they are causing him. . . You can't help being astonished at his brilliant judgement and clear insights. He looks in the best of health and seems well, although he seldom gets to bed before 5 or six A.M.'

On July 3, Hitler had been brought the radio monitoring service's transcript of Stalin's first public broadcast since 'Barbarossa' began. Stalin had by now recovered from his first shock at the Nazi onslaught. In his speech, he referred to Hitler and Ribbentrop as monsters and cannibals, and claimed that Hitler's ambition was to bring back the czars, and to destroy the independent constituent republics of the Soviet Union. 'He will Germanise them and turn them into the slaves of German princes and barons.' Stalin appealed to patriotic Russians everywhere to destroy everything of value in the path of the advancing Wehrmacht – railway rolling stock, crops, fuel, and raw materials. They were to form partisan units behind German lines, which were to blow up roads and bridges, destroy arms dumps and convoys, and hunt down and wipe out the enemy and his accomplices. 'This war with Fascist Germany must not be regarded as an ordinary war.'

The partisan war provided the SS task forces with a fresh rationale for their extermination drives, in which Russian Jews increasingly came to be

regarded as 'partisan material.' On July 10 we find Hitler telephoning Brauchitsch about the pointlessness of committing panzer divisions to the assault on Kiev: 35 percent of the city's population were Jews, he pointed out, so the bridges across the Dnieper would not be found intact.

Another factor now also weighed with Hitler: the vast, sprawling conurbations of Leningrad and Moscow would become death-traps if his precious tanks entered them. Thus he eventually decided that both cities were to be destroyed by bomber aircraft and by mass starvation. Two days after Stalin's radio speech Hitler told his private staff that Moscow would 'disappear from the earth's surface.' On July 8 he told Brauchitsch and Halder that its devastation was necessary to drive out its population, whom they would otherwise have to feed in the coming winter. He ordered the Luftwaffe to disrupt Moscow with a terror raid.

Emotionally however Hitler was far more attracted to the destruction of Leningrad. On July 16, Bormann noted: 'The Leningrad area is being claimed by the Finns. The Führer wants to raze Leningrad to the ground – then he'll give it to the Finns.' On July 21, Hitler visited Leeb's headquarters on the northern front. The army group's war diary records: 'The Führer emphasised that he expects a bitter enemy defence south of Leningrad, as Russia's leaders fully realise that Leningrad has been held up to the nation as a showpiece of the revolution these last twenty-four years, and that given the Slav mentality, which has already suffered from the fighting so far, the loss of Leningrad might result in a complete collapse.' As to the fact that this concentration on Leningrad would leave only infantry armies for the assault on Moscow, 'The Führer is not concerned by this, since to him Moscow is only a geographical objective.'

It was a strategic decision hotly contested by the General Staff. Halder wrote an irritable private letter on July 28: 'He's playing warlord again and bothering us with such absurd ideas that he's risking everything our wonderful operations so far have won. Unlike the French, the Russians won't just run away when they've been tactically defeated; they have to be slain one at a time in a terrain that's half forest and marsh; all this takes time and his nerves won't stand it. Every other day now I have to go over to him. Hours of claptrap and the outcome is there's only one man who understands how to wage wars. . .'

On July 14, Hitler told Ambassador Oshima: 'We shall not lose our heads as we press onward; we shall not advance beyond what we can really hold on to.' There seemed however no limit to his territorial ambitions.

Rundstedt wrote in a letter on the twentieth, 'Today Halder was here with some very far-reaching plans, but one doesn't like to think too far ahead.' Hitler was overheard to remark: 'I entered this war a nationalist, but I shall come out of it an imperialist.' Once, he had been heard to brag: 'Mr. Chamberlain likes to take weekends in the country; I shall take countries in the weekend!'

In the relaxed company of his private secretary, walking in the pitch darkness one night among the blockhouses, he made a bantering remark that again illustrated this. She had left her flashlight on his desk and kept stumbling. An orderly sent to fetch the flashlight reported it missing. In mock-righteous tones Hitler assured her: 'Look, I poach other people's countries – I don't pinch their flashlights!' He added with a belly-laugh: 'And that's just as well, because it is the small fry that get strung up. The big fish get away with it.'

AT A FIVE-hour conference with his chief minions – Rosenberg, Lammers, Keitel, Göring, and Bormann – on July 16, Hitler hammered home the point that Germany alone was entitled to benefit from defeating the Soviet Union. As for their secret aims, while they must be concealed from the world at large they themselves must be in no doubt: just as Germany had adopted the pose of protector in Norway, Denmark, Holland, and Belgium – where Germany had already staked her territorial claims in secret, whatever she might publicly profess for tactical reasons – so she must act in Russia. 'But let there be no doubt in *our* minds that we shall never depart from these territories. Never again must there be any military power west of the Urals, even if we have to fight a hundred years' war to prevent it. It shall never be permitted that anybody other than a German carries weapons!'

Since the Ukraine would be Germany's granary for the next three years, Hitler wanted Gauleiter Erich Koch appointed as Reich Commissar there: Koch, Göring's protégé, was a tough, cruel viceroy who had shown his mettle in the economic management of East Prussia. 'About six P.M. they had a break for coffee,' wrote Otto Bräutigam, Rosenberg's army liaison officer, who was waiting outside, in his diary: 'The Reichsmarschall was in a brilliant mood. The Führer voiced harsh criticism of the Swedes for the very meagre contingent they had provided for the struggle against Bolshevism, and even the Reichsmarschall described the Swedes as decadent. The Finns on the other hand earned broad praise for their pluck. After the break

the negotiations were resumed. About eight-thirty a final agreement was reached. The Reichsleiter [Rosenberg] . . . told us how the talks had gone. He had reached a compromise with the Reichsmarschall, who is directing the economy of the occupied eastern territories through the Economics Staff [*Wirtschaftsstab*] East, and with the Reichsführer SS [Himmler] who equally intends to direct the operations of his SS police units from his desk in Berlin. [Rosenberg] also told us that serious objections had been raised to each and every candidate for the various Reich Commissar posts, but that all candidates were now in: Gauleiter [Hinrich] Lohse for the Reich commissariat [RK] Ostland [the Baltic countries]; *Gesandter* [Siegfried] Kasche for the RK Russia, with his seat in Moscow; Gauleiter [Wilhelm] Kube for the RK Ukraine; and *Stabsleiter* [Arno] Schickedanz for the RK Caucasus together with *Gesandter* [Dr. Hermann] Neubacher as economic director. . . An addendum from the coffee-talk is that the Führer described the Germanising of the Crimea as vital, and expatiated at length on the strength of the Soviet armoured forces. He said to Göring, "As you know, with this campaign I had my first pronounced misgivings because of our uncertainty as to the enemy's strength, and I don't know whether I would have taken the same decision if I had been fully informed as to the overall strength of the Soviet army and in particular its gigantic tank rearmament."'

In Russia, he said, he would encourage neither schooling nor religion, a position on which he met the opposition of the devout Catholic Franz von Papen. Papen had sent him a long study urging that now was the right moment to reintroduce Christianity into Russia; Hitler would not hear of it. In a private aside, he noted that he might eventually consider letting in *all* the Christian sects 'so they can beat each other's brains out with their crucifixes.'

In this new German empire, soldiers with twelve years of service would automatically inherit a farmstead complete with cattle and machinery. He asked only that some of this new peasant breed should marry girls from the countryside. They were to retain their weapons, so that they could answer any fresh calls to arms against the Asiatic hordes. The NCOs were to manage the gasoline stations along the eastern autobahns. This soldier-peasant would above all make a far better educator than the university-trained elementary school teacher, who would always be dissatisfied: not that Hitler planned to educate the Russian masses. 'It is in our interest that the people know just enough to recognise the signs on the road,' he said.

On July 17 he signed the formal decrees putting these plans into effect, setting up an East Ministry under Alfred Rosenberg to handle the occupied

territories. Heinrich Himmler was given sweeping, indeed sinister, powers to police and exploit these new domains.

THE NAZI 'final solution of the Jewish problem' now took an unmistakable turn for the worse.

In some regions, particularly the Baltic countries, the 'Jewish problem' had solved itself. The natives had already taken primitive revenge for 'Jewish excesses' after the Soviet invasion of Lithuania in 1940. Hitler was informed that the Red Army's 'Jewish commissars' had rounded up the local businessmen one morning and shot them. Actively encouraged by Heydrich's units, the Latvians and Lithuanians had begun to liquidate every Jew they could lay hands on. Leeb's army group brought this to the attention of Hitler's HQ on July 5; Colonel Schmundt replied that the German troops were not to intervene – it was 'a necessary mopping-up operation.' Visiting Kovno a few days later Otto Bräutigam was sufficiently disturbed to write in his diary on July 11: 'While we turn a blind eye the Lithuanian auxiliary police are carrying out numerous pogroms against the Jews.'

The spirit inspiring Hitler in his war against the European Jews is clear from the entry in Hewel's diary on July 10:

> He says, 'I feel like the Robert Koch of politics. . . It is I who have discovered the Jews as the bacillus and ferment that causes all decay in society. What I have proved is this – that nations can survive without Jews . . . and in fact better. That is the cruellest blow I have dealt the Jews.'

He reverted to this surgical imagery a few days later, explaining to the Croatian defence minister: 'If just one country tolerates one Jewish family in its midst, then this will become the seat of a fresh bacillus infection. Once there are no more Jews in Europe the unity of the European nations can no longer be disrupted. It is unimportant where the Jews are sent – whether to Siberia or to Madagascar.' He planned, he said, to confront each country with this demand.

IN 1939 Hitler had confided to a bemused General Friedrich von Boetticher, the German military attaché in Washington, that he possessed documents proving Roosevelt's Jewish ancestry. It was to these unidentified Jewish-Bolshevik influences that Hitler ascribed Roosevelt's attempts to provoke a

shooting war with Germany. On July 13 the German diplomat Hasso von Etzdorf quoted Hitler as saying, 'So long as our eastern operations are still running, we won't let ourselves be provoked. Later the Americans can have their war, if they absolutely have to.' He quoted Hitler as telling Raeder he would do his utmost to prevent Roosevelt from entering the war for one or two more months, because the Luftwaffe was still committed to the Russian campaign. Besides, as Raeder informed the naval staff: 'The Führer still presumes that a victorious Russian campaign will affect the posture of the United States.' Hitler now forbade even the mining of Icelandic harbours.

It was reported that the American navy had been ordered to fire without warning or provocation on *any* German warship; American commanders concerned were instructed to deny responsibility and to suggest that a British unit was involved. Thus Roosevelt hoped to provoke countermeasures. All these facts Hitler learned from intercepted U.S. naval code signals. On July 20 Canaris reported: 'A certain disenchantment is to be discerned with the Reich foreign minister von R[ibbentrop]. Thus he himself now accepts America's entry into the war as imminent, and for the first time he spoke disparagingly of the "journalistic" reporting of Thomsen and Boetticher.'

Ribbentrop's stock with Hitler was currently at its lowest. Hitler sometimes even egged on his private staff to make fun of the foreign minister. In July the question arose as to whether Rosenberg or Ribbentrop should conduct propaganda in Russia; Hitler characteristically decided to allow *both* ministers a free hand. On the twenty-eighth Ribbentrop picked a quarrel with Hitler about this, and even heaped scorn on his decision to attack the Soviet Union. It was a stiflingly hot summer day. Hitler was so enraged that he clutched his heart, collapsed into a chair, and gasped at the petrified Ribbentrop that he must never again challenge his decisions. Ribbentrop, pale with fright, gave his word. Hitler then charged Lammers to inform the foreign minister that the diplomatic service had to stand aside until the guns had finished speaking.

That summer, despite the heat and Hitler's growing signs of a mysterious malaise, his conversations were monologues, delivered in a rich Austrian dialect to a handful of cronies assembled in his bunker, or over lunch or dinner at the long oblong table with Jodl at his left, an outside guest like Speer or Goebbels at his right, and his headquarters staff – the liaison officers, the younger adjutants, and secretaries – at their allotted places.

Sometimes Hitler would talk about the Nazi Party and Christianity. 'We must not try to combat religion,' he dictated, 'but let it wither away!'

Christa Schroeder, Hitler's devoted secretary, wrote in mid-July 1941:

> In our evening discussions with the Chief, the Church plays a big part. . . It is all so convincing, what the Chief says – when for example he explains how Christianity by its mendacity and hypocrisy has set back mankind in its development, culturally speaking, by two thousand years.
>
> I really must start writing down what the Chief says. It's just that these sessions go on for ages and afterward you are just too limp and lifeless to write anything. The night before last, when we left the Chief's bunker, it was already light. We did not turn in even then, as ordinary people would have, but made for the kitchen, ate a few cakes, and then strolled for two hours toward the rising sun, past farmyards and paddocks, past hillocks glowing with red and white clover in the morning sun, a fairyland on which you just could not feast your eyes enough; and then back to bed. We are incapable of getting up before two or three P.M.
>
> A crazy life. . . The like of our strange profession will probably never be seen again: we eat, we drink, we sleep, now and then we type a bit, and meantime keep him company for hours on end.
>
> Recently we did make ourselves a bit useful – we picked some flowers, so that his bunker does not look too bare.

On August 4, Hitler visited Field Marshal von Bock at the headquarters of Army Group Centre. The Battle of Smolensk was drawing to its end. Another three hundred thousand Russian captives were already being marched westward, but it was clear that the Führer had not yet made up his mind on what next. He was intoxicated by Bock's 'historic triumphs.' 'Now,' he had exclaimed on leaving his headquarters early that morning, 'we shall put things in order here for a thousand years.' He was however falling ill. And for another thing, what precisely *was* Russia's 'military strength,' which he had to destroy? Halder himself now wanly admitted that everybody had underestimated the Soviet colossus. 'When we attacked, we assumed there were 200 enemy divisions. To date, we have already counted 360. . .'

To Hitler, the key to victory lay in Russia's raw material centres and particularly the Donets region beyond Kharkov: 'That is the entire base of the Soviet economy.' To a diplomat he explained, 'Soon we shall occupy the richest Russian economic regions, which yield 61 percent of their iron and 35 percent of their molybdenum; and when we cut off their oil supplies from the south, the fate of Bolshevism will be sealed.'

Kiev

THAT SUMMER OF 1941 Hitler fell ill for the first time in five years. The stress of the Russian campaign, coupled with the hot, malarial climate in which the Wolf's Lair had been sited, told severely on the dictator. Worse, the brackish waters of Masuria had infected him with dysentery, and as the crucial strategic controversy developed between Hitler and his generals, his ability to overrule them was impaired by his own physical weakness; his own grand strategy, which was to set up a vast encircling movement by Army Groups North and South, enveloping Moscow from the rear, was opposed and circumvented by Brauchitsch and his staff, who favoured a direct assault on Moscow by Field Marshal von Bock's Army Group Centre. Brauchitsch stayed in Berlin and ignored Hitler's orders; Hitler was confined by circumstances to his field headquarters. When the army Commander in Chief did pay a rare visit to the Wolf's Lair, Hitler vainly warned that the way things were going the fronts would inevitably become static, as they had in World War I.

At the Wolf's Lair Hitler began holding war conferences; they were theatrical performances dominated by his monologues. They lasted for hours on end, sapping the energy of his generals, who had more urgent business elsewhere. Individual generals hesitated to speak their minds in front of such a large audience. But a few found that in private Hitler could be frankly spoken to; among them were Rundstedt, Reichenau, Guderian, Manstein, and later Milch, Zeitzler, and Ferdinand Schörner. On August 6, visiting Rundstedt and General Antonescu at Army Group South headquarters in the dreary Ukrainian town of Berdichev, Hitler's mind had seemed all but made up: Moscow would be left for last; Leningrad and the southern front would be dealt with first – the meteorologists had assured him that the current dry spell would last longer in the centre than the south anyway.

Before he could issue the necessary directive, however, Hitler was struck down. On August 7 Hewel would write cryptically in his diary, 'Führer *sakit* [ill].' (The diplomat Hewel had been a rubber planter in Java.) That morning, as Dr. Morell's diary reveals, Hitler had been sitting down when he suddenly felt dizzy and began to throw up. Morell noted, 'This bunker atmosphere has been getting him down for five or six weeks now. Then [Hans] Junge [an SS orderly] suddenly telephoned for me to come *immediately* to the Führer.' The doctor found Hitler deathly white. 'I feel very bad now,' gasped the Führer. 'Much worse than earlier. . . Up here,' he added, pointing to his left temple, 'I feel so strange. A short while ago I had a terrific row [with Ribbentrop]; I got immensely worked up and since that time I've been feeling rotten.' Morell was baffled. He found that Hitler's eyebrows were tender, his hands trembled now when extended; panicking, the doctor bent the hypodermic needle as he frantically injected some multivitamins and carefully wrote down every word Hitler spoke to him; to be on the safe side he gave him a Yatren pill – a medication useful in fact only against amoebic dysentery, which is confined almost entirely to the tropics. Hitler's blood pressure was alarmingly high – 170 mm – and there was a loud buzzing in his ears. Morell diagnosed vaguely: 'Vascular spasms with rush of blood to temples for various reasons.' He allowed Hitler a supper of one soft boiled egg, mashed potato, and strawberries.

It seemed a typical attack of bacillic dysentery. On the morning of the eighth Hitler sent his valet over to Dr. Morell to declare that he had 'never had a day in bed since being gassed in the World War.' Proud of this record, he staggered out of bed at eleven A.M. 'I went over,' recorded Morell in his pencil notes, 'without being sent for. Führer was very irritable, is feeling a lot worse than yesterday, hasn't slept a wink, but has no intention of lying in that confined space, he's got to get up and about.'

Hitler refused to allow any more injections for the time being; the places where Morell had spiked him the day before hurt so badly, he groaned, that they put all else in the shade. His ears still buzzing, he dressed and went over to the map room. Morell sent word that he should have only tea and a biscuit for lunch. 'He ordered spaghetti and strawberries,' he recorded.

The generals were delighted that the Führer had been laid low, although General Halder did record this day: 'Despite his medical indisposition the Führer has given the Commander in Chief [von Brauchitsch] the closest instructions on how he wants the air force squadrons used.' The generals began to go their own way, disregarding Hitler's strategic intentions.

'I think it's okay again, doctor,' Hitler said to Morell on August 9. 'Let's keep the check-up short, shall we? Because I want to go over to the map room.' During the war conference the buzzing suddenly returned in his ears. He sent for Morell to inquire about using leeches to lower his blood pressure. Morell was planning to use his multivitamins, Tonophosphan, electric heating pads, and other panaceas – he saw no reason not to try leeches too. Heinz Linge, the valet, later described: 'Hitler sat in front of a mirror and watched fascinated as the leeches quenched their thirst on his blood.'

> First [wrote Morell in his diary on August 11], I had made a small prick under the ear, but the skin was like leather. I had to push very hard to draw even the tiniest drops of blood. . . Führer himself shook the leeches out of the jar. I had to apply them with my fingers, as they slithered out of the forceps. The first one sucked much faster, the rear one only slowly. The front one dropped off first, letting go at the bottom and dangling. The rear one continued sucking for another half hour then it too let go at the bottom; I had to rip it off at the top.

Afterward Hitler's head bled for two hours; Morell applied bandages. Hitler decided not to show himself at supper on account of them, but he turned up for the usual war conference and tea session afterward: 'His ears had stopped buzzing!' noted Morell.

Over the next days the Führer's blood pressure dropped to more normal levels. 'Some throbbing in left head,' wrote Morell on the twelfth. 'Has had a lot of arguments and tension.' On the fourteenth, he persuaded Hitler to permit a white and red blood-corpuscle count and a cardiogram.

The blood serology results came back on the sixteenth: as was to be expected in a man getting so little fresh air and sunshine the red corpuscle count was low. 'Moreover,' recorded Morell on the eighteenth, 'the bunker is damp and unhealthy, the temperature just right for growing fungi; once, my boots were mouldy after being left two days, and my clothes got clammy in the bedroom. New bunker walls always sweat quantities of water at first. . . Then there are the colds caused by the draught of the extractor fans. I pointed out all *that* after just four days here in the bunker. . . People got chest constrictions, anaemia, and general bunker psychosis. Reminded him that I had initially recommended more frequent motor journeys or five days in his special train, a change of scenery to somewhere at a greater altitude. At that time the Führer declared that this wasn't on because of the

centralisation of his signals equipment, etc. I also suggested he spend fourteen days at the Berghof.' Hitler told him that he had taken a mild sedative, but did not want to make a habit of it. He felt well, but Goebbels, visiting him that day, August 18, wrote afterward that he looked somewhat strained and sickly. 'This is probably a result of his dysentery, and perhaps also of the drain on his strength of these last few weeks.'

The cardiogram had immediately revealed a depression of the T-wave. Alarmed, Morell had sent the traces to a leading authority on heart conditions, Professor Karl Weber, director of the heart institute at Bad Nauheim, instructing him only that they were of a 'very busy diplomat.'

Weber's report confirmed 'a considerable flattening of $S–T_I$ and $S–T_{II}$.' He added, 'If these are not the consequence of taking digitalis or an infection, we must assume primarily that the cause is coronary sclerosis.' He recommended performing electrocardiograms at fourteen-day intervals.

The ultimate diagnosis, rapid progressive coronary sclerosis, showed that Morell's illustrious 'Patient A' was now suffering a virtually incurable heart disease. In a man of Hitler's age it was not abnormal, but from now on there would always be the danger of angina pectoris or of an embolism with possibly fatal consequences. For the present Morell kept the truth from him (apart from a brief reference on August 18); in the Führer's presence he insisted that his heart and other organs were working well.

In private, however, Morell began to study textbooks on the heart, and additional medicines were added to Hitler's already overflowing cabinet. Hitler passively accepted his portly physician's explanations. 'Morell,' he said to another doctor, 'told me my energy consumption is as high as in the tropics, because of my uninterrupted intensive work.'

ON AUGUST 18, 1941, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch submitted to him an obstinate written argument for the immediate resumption of the attack on Moscow, as the city's capture would take at least two months. Hitler rejected it outright. It was most urgent in his view to deprive Stalin of his raw materials and arms industry. Besides, a rapid advance southward would encourage Iran to resist the Anglo-Russian invasion which he already knew was in the cards; in any case, he wanted the Crimea in German hands: it was from Crimean airfields that Russian bombers had recently attacked Romania. He was plagued at night by a recurring nightmare – the petroleum fields of Ploesti, ablaze from end to end. His panzer generals Hoth and Guderian were most unenthusiastic about his plans. They lamented that

their tanks were in need of overhaul. Hitler did not believe them. He had heard the same story before Dunkirk. The two generals, he said, were obviously just trying to conceal their own arrogant disapproval of his grand strategy.

The Army High Command continued stubbornly with its plans to attack Moscow. Only later was it realised that Hitler's strategy would have offered the better prospects. Bock's armies would still be stalled outside Moscow when winter set in, and Hitler's illness bore the blame. 'Today I still believe,' Göring was to tell his captors, 'that had Hitler's original plan of genius not been diluted like that, the eastern campaign would have been decided by early 1942 at the latest.'

LIFE WITHIN Security Zone One revolved around Hitler. When he was away it was as though the dynamo had been wrenched bodily out of the powerhouse. Favoured indeed were those with special passes to this holy compound. The presence of his women staff was frowned upon:

> It's a thorn in some people's side [wrote Christa Schroeder in one letter] that even in wartime the Chief has his personal staff around him, and particularly of course that we two females are included.
>
> We aren't here on an outing but because the Chief wants us and maintains that he can't work without us.
>
> More than once he has stressed in these gentlemen's presence that without us . . . he would be in a hopeless mess. . . It cannot have been a very pleasant situation when the Chief asked his Wehrmacht adjutant [Schmundt] whether a tent has been laid on for his ladies at the next headquarters. The reply was in the negative, so the Führer angrily ordered that accommodation was to be provided for us. 'Oh, they had imagined they were only going to stay there in a tent encampment a few days, so we would not be needed!'
>
> All of these excuses show how much they want to get rid of us.

Three weeks later the same secretary was complaining of the monotony. 'We have now been here nine weeks, and the rumour is we shall stay here until the end of October. . . I am so sick of inactivity that I recently tried to convince the Chief he needs only *one* secretary. . .' Her other writings unmistakably reflect Hitler's inner thoughts. Thus on August 20 we find her recording:

> A few days ago we saw here a British newsreel that reached us via America, showing the horrifying devastation of entire streets in London: all the big department stores, Parliament, and so on are in ruins. The camera showed the huge fires raging, as it panned across whole sections of the city, with warehouse after warehouse forming one sea of fire. The commentary says that the British are sticking it out in the knowledge that Berlin looks just the same. Oh, if the poor British could only guess! . . .
>
> I long for nothing more fervently than that the British should come forward with peace proposals once we have dealt with Russia. This war with Britain can only result in us smashing each other's cities to smithereens. And Mr. Roosevelt chuckles in gleeful anticipation of the day he will inherit Britain's legacy. I really cannot understand why the British won't listen to the voice of reason. Now that we are expanding to the east, we have no need for their colonies.
>
> I find it all so much more practical that everything will be right on our doorstep: the Ukraine and Crimea are so fertile we can plant everything we need there, and the rest (coffee, tea, cocoa, etc.) we can obtain by barter from South America. It is all so simple and obvious.

Those in authority in London and Washington were, however, bent on Hitler's extinction. In the second week of August, Churchill and Roosevelt met off Newfoundland, and proclaimed the eight-point Atlantic Charter, affirming that they sought no territorial aggrandisement, that they frowned on all territorial changes that did not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the people concerned, and that all nations should enjoy equal access to the raw materials of the earth and to its oceans. (Russia, which had lost the European territories it had annexed in 1940, subscribed to the Charter in 1942 along with some twenty nations that were then at war with Germany.)

On August 25, Britain and Russia invaded Iran; the United States took over the naval watch of the Denmark Straits (north-west of Iceland) and undertook escort duties on North Atlantic convoys.

Clearly the distinction between neutrality and belligerency was being increasingly blurred.

Hitler approved Goebbels's mischievous idea of immediately following Clement Attlee's broadcast on the Atlantic talks (as Churchill's deputy) with two special communiqués, announcing that the Black Sea ports of Odessa

and Nikolaiev were now under siege and that the Soviet iron-ore fields were in German hands.

Hitler had asked Goebbels to come and see him on August 18. Apparently he was prompted by the growing Catholic clamour against the Nazi euthanasia programme. This 'covert liquidation of the mentally ill,' as Goebbels frankly termed it in his diary, had proceeded without friction until now. As its manager Philipp Bouhler had told him on January 30, 1941, they had already quietly got rid of eighty thousand, and had only sixty thousand more to go. 'Hard work, but necessary too,' Goebbels commented in his diary. Early in July however the Bishop of Munster, Count von Galen, had blown the lid off the scandal in a pastoral letter, and on the twenty-seventh he had instituted private criminal proceedings against persons unknown. For the Nazi Party and government alike it was acutely embarrassing: Hitler's arbitrary 1939 law authorising euthanasia had never been published.*

Bormann submitted to Hitler a memorandum on the desirability of executing the bishop for sedition. Goebbels supported Bormann, arguing that Galen had spiced his sermon with wholly unfounded charges. Hitler sagely disregarded Goebbels's advice, but on August 24 he ordered the entire euthanasia operation shut down immediately. The latter continued nonetheless.† Immersed in 'Barbarossa,' Hitler remained unaware that Martin Bormann was already waging open war on the Church. On one occasion Hitler said, 'If my mother were still alive, she'd definitely be a churchgoer and I wouldn't want to hinder her. On the contrary, you've got to respect the simple faith of the people.' Hitler assured Goebbels and Rosenberg that he would not easily forgive the German church leaders their behaviour during this emergency. But until the war was won the Party must proceed slowly against the Church. On July 30, 1941, Bormann personally circularised all the gauleiters, on Hitler's orders, instructing them to refrain from any persecution of the religious communities, since this would only divide the nation which Hitler had so arduously united.

NOR WAS Hitler the mainspring behind the 'Jewish question.' There is now no doubt that Dr. Goebbels was. 'In the eastern campaign,' a Goebbels

* See pages 235–6 where the decree of 1939 is mentioned.

† The euthanasia killings proceeded until February 1945, evidently on the local initiative of gauleiters and doctors.

memorandum read, 'the German soldier has seen the Jew in all his cruelty and repulsiveness. Clearly when the soldier comes home from the wars, he must not find any Jews here waiting for him.' Ever since the summer of 1940 Goebbels had prepared for the rapid deportation of Berlin's seventy thousand Jews to Poland; but the war needs for transport overrode his ambitions. They could not begin the big roundup until the war was over.

Goebbels brought with him to Hitler's headquarters on August 18 a series of harsh measures designed to hound and intimidate the Jews. Afterward, he noted: 'One only needs to imagine what the Jews would do if they had us in their power, to know what we must do now that we are on top. . . I manage to get my way completely with the Führer on the Jewish matter. He agrees we can introduce a large, visible badge for all the Jews in the Reich, to be worn by all Jews in public, so as to obviate the danger that the Jews will act as grumblers and defeatists without being detected. And in future we will allocate to Jews who don't work smaller food rations than to Germans. . . Incidentally, the Führer agrees that as soon as the first transport possibilities arise, the Berlin Jews will be deported from Berlin to the east.' Hitler may have reminded Goebbels of his January 1939 Reichstag speech.

> The Führer is convinced that the prophecy he uttered then in the Reichstag – that if the Jews once more succeeded in provoking a world war, it would end with the destruction of the Jews – is coming true. It is coming true these weeks and months with a dread certainty that is almost uncanny. In the east the Jews will have to square accounts; they have already footed part of the bill in Germany. . . At any rate in the coming world the Jews will have little cause for mirth.

August 18 was a beautiful summer day at the Führer's headquarters. Probably in response to Dr. Morell's prompting, Hitler spent the four hours of his talk with Goebbels strolling in the woods – the first time he had done so in five weeks. He asked Goebbels about the mood in Berlin, which had recently undergone small-scale Russian air attacks. He had no worries about the morale of his people as a whole. The Wehrmacht's big push southward would shortly begin. 'The Führer is not concerned with occupying particular regions or cities,' wrote Goebbels. 'He wants to avoid casualties if at all possible. Therefore he does not intend to take Petersburg [Leningrad] or Kiev by force of arms, but to starve them into submission; once Petersburg

has been cut off, his plan is to destroy the city's lifeline with his Luftwaffe and artillery. . . Our first Luftwaffe attacks will hit the water, power, and gas plants.' Perhaps, mused Hitler wistfully to Goebbels, Stalin might even now sue for peace. 'He has of course little in common with the plutocrats in London; . . . the moment he sees that the Bolshevik system itself is on the verge of collapse and can only be salvaged by surrender, then he will certainly be willing to do so. . . The Führer is convinced that Moscow and London were in the same line of business long before June,' wrote Goebbels.

Their aim had been identical, the destruction of the Reich. Stalin had been on the brink of attacking Germany: German division commanders found the enemy had better large-scale maps of Germany, Austria, and Silesia than they did themselves. Air reconnaissance revealed that Stalin had established a huge complex of arms factories beyond the Urals. The Russians had also built several completely unpublicised highways along which they advanced, while the Wehrmacht adhered to the only roads they were aware of. In Red Army barracks were found dummy German soldiers that had been manufactured for target practice long before June 1941. Most of Hitler's commanders – including Bock, Kluge, Halder, and Richard Ruoff – agreed that he had selected the proper time to strike.

As he repeatedly remarked, he was not going to make the mistakes that 'a certain other famous man' – meaning Napoleon – had made. Aided by thousands of prisoners, his army engineers laboured around the clock to repair the demolished Russian railroad tracks and re-lay them on the different German gauge. By mid-August a twin track extended as far as Smolensk.

Once, on the seventeenth, he educated his private staff on the dangers of over-optimism. 'Always credit the enemy with doing just what you least want,' he told Hewel. For example, he tried to envisage what Stalin would do if the Pripyet Marshes did not exist. On August 19 Martin Bormann quoted Hitler as remarking, 'Through my activities so far the German nation has already gained over two and a half *million* people. Even if I ask 10 percent of this as a sacrifice, I shall still have given ninety percent.'

ON THAT day Dr. Morell had recorded, 'Did not give the Führer a check-up today as he felt fine.' But the next day Hitler was still feeling low. 'After working a lot yesterday,' noted Morell, 'he was a bit jumpy. His hands were shaking and his head swimming.' He was planning to invite Mussolini to the eastern front, but there was still a slight buzzing in his ears. On the twenty-first he burst out at Morell: 'The meal repertoire [here] is very limited.'

('Trouble is,' recorded the doctor, 'he turns down so many things we suggest, and it's very difficult to make suggestions, what with his being a vegetarian.') Hitler wanted 'that pleasant treatment' with the leeches again, but all but one of those used on him before had died, the Führer's blood evidently having been to their distaste. 'I was hoping,' wrote Morell on August 22, 'to apply leeches once more before Mussolini gets here so his [Hitler's] head will be completely clear.' 'But I can't find the time yet,' said Hitler. 'Right now I'm up to my eyes in work. Of course I want it too.'

> Set three leeches [recorded Morell in his diary of August 23], two behind the ear, one in front. The latter sucked well and strong. Head clearer and lighter. Says he found their sucking not at all unpleasant.

Restored to health, Hitler began to fight back against the General Staff.

On August 21 he dictated a brusque letter to Brauchitsch beginning with the words, 'The army's proposal for continuing the operations in the east does not accord with my intentions. I order the following' – and he restated the objectives he had been demanding since December 1940: in the north, the isolation of Leningrad; and in the south, the capture of the Crimea, the Donets industrial and coal regions, and the Caucasus oil fields. Field Marshal von Bock's Army Group Centre, facing Moscow, was to remain on the defensive.

This rude rebuff caused uproar in the army. Brauchitsch suffered his first mild heart attack. Halder literally wept over Hitler's 'pamphleteering.' 'Tortured days lie behind me,' he wrote to his wife on August 23. 'Again I offered my resignation to stave off an act of folly. The outcome was completely unsatisfactory. . . The objective I set myself – namely to finish off the Russians once for all before the year is out – will not be achieved. . . History will level at us the gravest accusation that can be made of a High Command, namely that for fear of undue risk we did not exploit the attacking impetus of our troops. It was the same in the western campaign. But there the enemy's internal collapse cast a merciful veil over our errors.'

Bock's diary bespoke an equally anguished heart. 'I don't want to "capture Moscow"! I want to destroy the enemy's army, and the bulk of that army is *in front* of me!' He telephoned Colonel Schmundt asking that the Führer at least give a hearing to Guderian. Guderian was granted a midnight conference with Hitler on August 23. After hearing Hitler's case for the main thrust to continue now toward the south, Guderian decided that

the Führer was right. 'I returned,' he wrote afterward, 'on the twenty-fourth, well satisfied and with high hopes.'

Bock's wrath and Halder's indignation at Guderian's 'sell-out' were immense. Halder confiscated his most powerful corps, the Forty-Sixth panzer, and assigned it to the Fourth Army on the Moscow front. With only two corps, Guderian's offensive limped and stumbled. 'Since the twenty-seventh I've been fighting for reinforcements, but they are granted me only in driblets and too late,' he wrote in one letter. His Chief of Staff observed in his diary that Guderian 'has the impression that [Bock and Halder] are still hanging on to their old plan – the advance on Moscow.' By early September it was clear, as bad weather arrived, that the Red Army north of the Desna River had eluded him.

The Duce arrived at the Wolf's Lair on August 25. Hewel noted: 'War conference, then a communal meal in the dining bunker and a talk with my Chief [Ribbentrop]. In the evening a cold buffet in the garden. Vittorio Mussolini is particularly unattractive and dumb. . .'

The next day Hitler showed Mussolini over the battlefield at Brest-Litovsk, where the two-ton projectiles of his 620-millimetre mortars had reduced the citadel to ruins. He admitted that his military Intelligence had grossly misinformed him about the Soviet powers of resistance, but he predicted that final victory would he his by the spring of 1942.

That evening both dictators left for the Führer's southern headquarters site in Galicia. Mussolini joined Hitler for a confidential talk – pouring his heart out for the first time about the very real difficulties his Fascist revolution was in.* In 1943 Hitler would recall him as lamenting: 'Tell me, what can you do if you have got officers with reservations about the regime and about its ideologies . . . who say – the moment you talk of your ideology or of *raison d'état* – "We are monarchists: we owe our allegiance to the King!"'

This admission of impotence in face of the Italian monarchy was a shock to Hitler, and he never forgot Mussolini's words.

The next day, August 28, both dictators flew across the fertile Ukrainian countryside for hours until they reached Rundstedt's command post at

* On August 30, 1941, Canaris returned to Berlin from talks with his Italian counterpart, Colonel Cesare Amé, and told his Abwehr staff: 'A. describes the situation in Italy as very grave. The surprise caused by the eastern campaign has had an extremely unpleasant effect on the Italian people.'

Uman. 'His face was sunburnt to a brilliant red,' wrote Morell guiltily, 'and his forehead was very painful with large burnt patches, so he was very grumpy.' Keitel had eyes only for the countryside. 'One could sense the virginity of the soil,' he recalled.

Three months later Hitler described his own vivid impressions. 'I must have seen thousands of women there, but not one of them was wearing even the cheapest ornaments. In their wretched hovels there was neither cutlery nor other household goods. And this misery prevailed in a region whose soil was capable of the biggest harvest imaginable. . . Only when this terrified, scared mass of people saw with their own eyes the commissars being shot did they gradually turn back into human beings again.'

The summer would soon be over and still Russia had not been defeated. At the end of August, Christa Schroeder wrote:

> Our stay here at the headquarters gets longer and longer. First we thought we would be back in Berlin by the end of July, then they talked of mid-October; and now they are already saying we will not get away before the end of October, if even then.
>
> It is already quite cool here, like autumn, and if it occurs to the Chief to spend the winter here we shall all be frozen.
>
> This protracted bunker existence can't be doing us any good. The Chief does not look too well either, he gets too little fresh air and now he is oversensitive to sun and wind the moment he goes out in his car for a few hours.
>
> I would have loved to stay in Galicia – we were all in favour of it – but security there is not good enough. . .
>
> The whole countryside there is freer. Here in the forest it all crowds in on you after a while. Besides, there you didn't have the feeling that you were locked in: you saw the peasants working in the fields and it made you feel free, while here we keep stumbling on sentries and are forever showing our identity cards.
>
> Well, I suppose that wherever we are we're always cut off from the world – in Berlin, at the Berghof, or on our travels. It is always the same sharply defined circle, always the same circuit inside the fence.

Just what Hitler's New Order would be in Europe was a secret that he closely kept. That Slavs and Bolsheviks – particularly if they were Jewish – would not prosper under it was obvious; but the positions of countries like

Italy, France, Hungary, and even Russia were still undefined. Hitler's naval adjutant, Puttkamer, wrote revealingly on August 11:

> At lunch yesterday the Führer spoke about our relationship with France. This elicited for the first time the reason why he doesn't take up any of the proposals made about it. He said he thought that a man like Darlan is being perfectly honest and that it was quite possible to achieve a bearable relationship with France by progressing from armistice to a preliminary peace. This was absolutely possible, in his view, even if we made stiff demands: France expected them, would uphold them, and would join the war at our side. So – *if* we were alone – everything could be attained.
>
> The decisive obstacle is however Italy's claims – Tunis and Corsica. No French government could uphold these. But he couldn't persuade the Italians to drop them; he had to associate himself with these claims too. He couldn't barter our ally Italy against France, he said.
>
> So that's the real reason, which was news to both me and Jodl, with whom I discussed it.

On September 8, referring to Hungary, Hitler told Hewel: 'These are all just alliances of expediency. For example, the German people know that our alliance with Italy is only an alliance between Mussolini and myself. We Germans have sympathies only with Finland; we could find some sympathy for Sweden, and of course with Britain.' Here he must have sighed, for he added: 'A German-British alliance would be an alliance from people to people! The British would only have to keep their hands off the Continent. They could keep their empire – and the world if they wanted!'

Hitler's conquest of the Ukraine would mean that he no longer needed the raw-material regions of France. As he explained to his ambassador in France, Otto Abetz, on September 16, the Soviet iron-ore fields at Krivoi Rog alone would yield a million tons of ore a month. Hitler would insist on retaining only Alsace and Lorraine, and the Channel coast facing England. Given what he saw as such modest claims, Hitler assured Abetz that France would certainly have a share of the pickings from the New Order.

In his diary of September 15, 1941, Weizsäcker described Hitler's foreign policy in these words: 'The quasi-depression of four weeks ago has been cured, probably the physical malaise too. An autobahn is being planned to the Crimean peninsula. There is speculation as to the probable manner

of Stalin's departure. If he withdraws into Asia, he might even be granted a peace treaty.'

The next day, Papen also raised Stalin's future with Hitler, and the Führer repeated what he had told Goebbels a month before – that once the Wehrmacht had occupied a certain forward line in Russia, it might be possible to find common ground with the Red dictator, who was after all a man of enormous achievements.

As another diplomat – Hasso von Etzdorf – commented: 'As to Stalin's fate, [Hitler] sees two possibilities; either he gets bumped off by his own people, or he tries to make peace with us. Because, he says, Stalin as the greatest living statesman must realise that at sixty-six you can't begin your life's work all over again if it will take a lifetime to complete it; so he'll try to salvage what he can, with our acquiescence. And in this we should meet him halfway. If Stalin could only decide to seek expansion for Russia toward the south, the Persian Gulf, as he [Hitler] recommended to him once [November 1940], then peaceful co-existence between Russia and Germany would be conceivable.'

Papen for his part impressed on Hitler the need to promote a 'constructive peace plan' after Russia's overthrow, a plan capable of inspiring all Europeans.

'The Führer then turned to his plans for the east,' relates the only existing record of Hitler's conversation with Abetz on September 16:

> Petersburg [Leningrad], the 'poisonous nest' from which for so long Asiatic venom has 'spewed forth' into the Baltic, must vanish from the earth's surface. The city is already cut off. . . The Asiatics and the Bolsheviks must be hounded out of Europe, this 'episode of two hundred fifty years of Asiatic pestilence' is at an end. The Urals will be the frontier beyond which Stalin and his like can do as they please. But he [Hitler], by launching occasional expeditions across the Urals, will also ensure that Stalin gets no respite there either.
>
> After the expulsion of the Asiatics, Europe will never again be dependent on an outside power, nor need we 'care two hoots' about America.
>
> Europe will meet its own raw material needs, and it will have its own export market in the Russian territories so we shall no longer need the rest of the world's trade. The new Russia this side of the Urals will be 'our India,' but far more handily located than that of Britain. The new

> Greater German Empire will embrace 135 million people, and it will rule 150 million more.

The backbone of the new empire would be the Wehrmacht and above all the SS. In public Hitler talked with Himmler only of innocuous matters – architecture, the salon of Frau Bruckmann, or the relative nutritive values of the potato and the soya bean. In private they elaborated ways of fighting the multiplying and Hydra-headed partisan movements springing up throughout the Nazi-occupied territories. Hitler linked these movements with Stalin's July broadcast, and he condemned as far too mild the treatment so far meted out to captured offenders. On September 7 – as Himmler was at the Wolf's Lair – he ordered that if the murderer of a German NCO in Paris was not found immediately, fifty hostages were to be shot; and in future the ratio was to be a hundred 'Communists' for each German life taken. (The German military commander admittedly protested, and Hitler left the final scale of reprisals to his discretion.)

The siege of Leningrad symbolised the brutalisation of this war. Over the horizon, Leeb's tank crews could see the glittering gold spires of the admiralty building – so near and yet so far. In a formal directive, Number 35, issued on September 6, Hitler ordered Leningrad to be so thoroughly isolated by his ground forces that by mid-September at the latest he could recover his tanks and Richthofen's air squadrons for the main assault on Moscow after all. On September 9 the Luftwaffe began around-the-clock bombing operations. Jeschonnek's deputy wrote in his diary: 'Food already appears to be short there.'

On the tenth, Rosenberg's liaison officer reported to him from Hitler's headquarters:

> The entire population has remained and actually been swollen by the evacuation of the surrounding suburbs. Already it's almost impossible to get bread, sugar, and meat in Leningrad.
>
> The Führer wants to avoid house-to-house fighting, which would cost our troops heavy casualties. The city is to be just shut in, shot to pieces by artillery and starved out. A few days or weeks here or there make no difference, as the besieging army won't have to be very big.
>
> The Finns have suggested diverting Lake Ladoga into the Gulf of Finland – which lies several metres lower – to wash away the city of Leningrad.

On September 12, General Halder emphasised to Leeb's army group that his tanks would shortly be pulled back from Leningrad for the attack on Moscow. General Hans Reinhardt protested at the effect this order to halt was having on his men. 'The city is spread out before them, and nobody is stopping them going right on in!'

Hitler agreed however that the tanks should not be committed; Leningrad should be destroyed by bombardment instead. Admiral Raeder asked him to spare at least the dockyards; this too Hitler refused, but as regards the tanks Keitel telephoned Leeb to postpone their withdrawal by forty-eight hours. On the twelfth the Luftwaffe commander, Richthofen, entered in his diary: 'Colonel Schmundt. . . talked about the problem of Finland and Leningrad. Over L. the "plough shall pass!"' On September 16 the Nazi tanks were finally halted, and their withdrawal from Leningrad to the Moscow front began.

Kiev at least was in German hands. The news broke at Hitler's headquarters late on September 19. For days afterward he spoke of his plans for Europe. Dr. Werner Koeppen, Rosenberg's liaison officer, recorded these historic conversations:

> *Lunchtime, September 19.* Dr. Todt related his impressions of his latest journey to Oslo and Trondheim, and of the first ground broken for the major traffic link between Germany and Denmark. The Führer talked about his plan to rebuild Trondheim afresh in terrace-form, so that every house will be in the sun all day long. . .
>
> The Führer then spoke of the need to build one autobahn up to Trondheim, and another down to the Crimea. After the war the German citizen shall have the chance of taking his Volkswagen and looking over the captured territories in person, so that if need should arise he will also be willing to fight for them. We must never repeat the pre-war error of having the colonial idea the property of only a few capitalists or corporations. . . The railway traverses distances, but the road opens them up.

Earlier, as he told Seyss-Inquart on the twenty-sixth, it was downright absurd that though a vast, only sparsely populated, empire lay in the east with almost inexhaustible resources and raw materials, western Europe struggled to meet its needs by imports from colonies far overseas. 'Once we have securely occupied the vitally important European regions of the Soviet Union, the war east of the Urals can go on a hundred years, for all

we care.' Hitler learned that rubber was being grown near Kharkov – he had himself already seen excellent samples of it. 'The giant farms Stalin has introduced will probably be the best way to use the land in the future too, as they are probably the only way of cultivating the land intensively . . .' He felt that most Russians had become quite accustomed to being treated like animals.

If the occupying authorities controlled the alcohol and tobacco supplies, he had said at lunch a few days earlier, they would have the population eating out of their hands.

'The frontier between Europe and Asia,' reflected Hitler over dinner on the twenty-third, 'is not the Ural Mountains but there where the settlements of Germanically inclined people end and unadulterated Slav settlements begin. It is our task to push this frontier as far east as possible, and if need be far beyond the Urals. It is the eternal law of nature that gives Germany as the stronger power the right before history to subjugate these peoples of inferior race, to dominate them and to coerce them into performing useful labours.' This project of the ethnic cleansing of Berlin, Vienna, and Prague would also encompass the Jews, but not until the end of Barbarossa. 'They are all to be transported ultimately to [regions?] adjacent to the Bolshevik [rump territory?]' dictated Goebbels on the twenty-third (the microfiche is only partly decipherable).

In the 'Protectorate' of Bohemia-Moravia a wave of opposition had appeared since 'Barbarossa.' There were slowdowns and stoppages and terror incidents. Rumour reached Hitler that a full-scale uprising was being plotted. 'Only now do they realise that there is no escape,' he said. 'As long as the great Russia, mother of all Slavs, was there they could still hope.'

Koeppen reported Hitler's remarks at lunch a few days later: 'He keeps repeating that he knows the Czechs of old. To them [Reich Protector] Neurath was just a friendly old duffer whose blandness and good humour they rapidly mistook for weakness and stupidity. . . The Czechs are a nation of "cyclists" – they bow from the waist upward, but the legs still kick!'

One evening at the end of September Otto Bräutigam recorded this remark by Hitler in his diary: 'We found out that the Czech government had issued orders for a boycott on arms production. Output efficiency had generally declined by about 20 or 30 percent, ammunition was being turned out with bad fuses and even the armourplate processed by Skoda was showing flaws that could only be explained by deliberate sabotage.'

On Bormann's advice Hitler appointed Heydrich Acting Protector. On September 24, Hitler told him his job would be 'a combat mission' of limited duration and gave him carte blanche. Heydrich flew to Prague on September 27 and arrested the rebel ringleaders – among them General Alois Elias, the prime minister. The next day he phoned Himmler: Elias had confessed to being in contact with the Beneš government in London. Elias was condemned to death, but Hitler decided he was of more value as a hostage for the Czechs' good behaviour, and he survived until May 1942.

Hitler had briefed Heydrich fully on the future of his Protectorate. Heydrich reported this to his local governors in Prague on October 2. One day, he said, the Protectorate would be settled by Germans. 'This does not mean,' said Heydrich, 'that we now have to try to Germanise all Czech rabble. . . For those of good race and good intentions the matter is simple; they will be Germanised. For the rest, those of inferior racial origin or with hostile intentions, I shall get rid of them – there is plenty of room in the east for them.' Inferior but well-meaning Czechs would probably be sent to work in the Reich. The more difficult category – those of good racial characteristics but hostile intentions – would have to be liquidated.*

Hitler advised Heydrich to introduce the Czech workers to both the carrot and the stick. In any factory where sabotage occurred, ten hostages were to be shot; but in factories with a good output the workers were to get extra rations. Heydrich went much further, introducing the Czechs for the first time to the full Bismarckian social security programme. 'The Czech workers have accepted the liquidation of the conspirators quite calmly,' Koeppen noted when Heydrich first reported back from Prague, over dinner on October 2. 'The most important thing to them is to have enough food and work. . . One worker has even written to Heydrich, giving his full name, saying that Czech history has always been like this: each generation has to learn its lesson and then there is peace for a time. He added that nobody would object if another two thousand of them were shot, either.' The Nazis would rise to the occasion.

* Hitler had used the same language to Neurath, State Secretary Karl-Hermann Frank, and the minister of justice in September 1940: 'Czechs turned down on racial grounds or anti-Reich in attitude were not to be assimilated. This category was to be eliminated *(sei auszumerzen).*' In conversation over lunch on October 6, 1941 Hitler announced that the Jews in the Protectorate were all to be deported eastward. 'After this war the Führer proposes to transplant all the racially valueless elements from Bohemia to the east.'

Cold Harvest

For Hitler the last act of 'Barbarossa,' as he thought, had now begun. At five-thirty on the morning of October 2, 1941, Field Marshal von Bock's army group – nearly two thousand tanks commanded by Guderian, Erich Hoepner, and Hoth – opened the first phase of 'Operation Typhoon,' the attack on Moscow. Lunch that day at Hitler's headquarters started late as he listened to the early reports on this last battle, designed to destroy Marshal Timoshenko's armies. When the meal began, he was unusually quiet. He broke the silence only to ask about the weather prospects, and then again to reminisce about the Berghof – where even now Bormann's construction crews were carrying out still further architectural 'improvements' to the mountainside.

Russia's weather was in no way unpredictable. Indeed, as early as August 14 Jeschonnek's deputy, Hoffmann von Waldau, had privately written at Luftwaffe headquarters: 'It is all getting very late. At the end of October the war will die out in the snow.' And on September 9, three days after Hitler issued the directive for 'Typhoon,' Waldau had gloomily predicted: 'We are heading for a winter campaign. The real trial of this war has begun. My belief in final victory remains.'

At 1:30 P.M. on October 3, 1941, Hitler's train arrived in Berlin. He drove to the Sportpalast, where he delivered one of the most stirring speeches of his life – wholly *ex tempore* and hence 'enormously devout,' as Hewel afterward reported. Hitler was exhilarated by the welcome the capital gave him. 'It was the same atmosphere as at the most wonderful of our meetings during the years of struggle. The reason was that no special tickets had been distributed – the audience really was a cross section of the people. The ordinary people really do make the most appreciative audience, they are the people who deep down inside know they support me.

They are marked by that kind of stability that can stand the heaviest burdens – while our intellectuals just flutter hither and thither.'

In his speech he outlined his unifying role in Europe – how Italy, Hungary, the Nordic countries, and then Japan had come closer to Germany. 'Unhappily, however, not the nation I have courted all my life: the British. Not that the British people as a whole alone bear the responsibility for this, no, but there are some people who in their pigheaded hatred and lunacy have sabotaged every such attempt at an understanding between us, with the support of that international enemy known to us all, international Jewry. . . As in all the years I strove to achieve understanding whatever the cost, there was Mr. Churchill who kept on shouting, "I want a war!" Now he has it.'

Within an hour Hitler's train was bearing him back to headquarters. Victory in Russia seemed certain. Guderian was approaching Orel. Like two fishermen's nets flung out over the sea, Bock's armies were hauling in their catches at Vyazma and Bryansk. Another 673,000 prisoners would be found inside. On the Sea of Azov, Rundstedt destroyed the Soviet Eighteenth Army and took another 100,000 prisoners. A grim jocularity overcame Hitler – he began talking freely at mealtimes again, gossiping about the different kinds of caviar and oysters and the mysterious bacteria that had massacred the crabs some decades before. Russia? 'We are planning big things for our share of the territory, "our India" – canals and railroads, the latter with a new gauge of ten feet. The population . . . must vegetate. For Stalin's rump-empire [beyond the Urals] Bolshevism will be a good thing – our guarantee of their permanent ignorance.' Thus wrote Weizsäcker of Hitler's ambitions.

At dinner on October 6 Hitler was again in an expansive mood. Major Engel, his ebullient army adjutant, had been bitten by a dog, so Hitler uncorked a stream of witticisms about the fearful consequences if rabies should take hold at his headquarters. Dinner was short, so that the latest newsreel films could be shown. Hitler saw for himself his troops battling forward under General von Manstein, now commanding the Eleventh Army in the assault on the Crimea; he also saw the northern armies frustrating the frantic Russian attempts to relieve Leningrad.

By October 7, the Bryansk pocket was completely sealed, and the armoured divisions were about to close the other huge ring around Vyazma. Gripped by this military drama, Hitler did not eat that day – although Himmler was guest of honour, it being his forty-first birthday. Hewel mar-

velled in his diary: 'Jodl says, "The most crucial day of the whole Russian war," and compares it with Königgrätz.'

Intercepted code-messages from diplomats in Moscow suggested that the end there was not far off. The Turkish ambassador told of tens of thousands of casualties. For a time, Hitler considered throwing his SS Life Guards a hundred miles forward to Rostov on the Don, the gateway to the Caucasus oil-fields. ('The fact that in the not too distant future we'll have used up every last drop of gasoline makes this a matter of the utmost urgency,' Keitel told Canaris later in October.)

General Eduard Wagner, the army's quartermaster general, wrote privately: 'Now the operation is rolling toward Moscow. Our impression is that the final great collapse is immediately ahead, and that tonight the Kremlin is packing its bags. What matters now is that the panzer armies reach their objectives. Strategic objectives are being defined that would have stood our hair on end at one time. East of Moscow!! . . . I keep having to marvel at the Führer's military judgement. This time he is intervening – and one can say, decisively – in the operations, and so far he has been right every time. The major victory in the south is *his* work alone.'

On October 8, Jodl repeated his triumphant verdict: 'We have finally and without any exaggeration won this war!' Hitler signed an OKW order forbidding Bock to accept Moscow's surrender, if offered; no German troops were to set foot there – the city was to be encircled and wiped out by fire and bombardment. Small gaps might be left on the far side of the Moscow ring, to allow the citizenry to flee eastward into the Soviet lines and increase the chaos there. On the eastern front it had now begun to rain.

THE COMING victory over Russia promised to relieve Hitler of immense strategic burdens. Japan would be free to wade into the United States, which would then hardly be in a position to come to Britain's aid in her final fight with Germany. Recognising this, Roosevelt sent Averell Harriman to assist Britain's Lord Beaverbrook at a Moscow conference on ways of rushing military support to Stalin. On October 6, Hitler had been handed the decoded text of Roosevelt's letter introducing Harriman to Stalin:

> Harry Hopkins has told me in great detail of his encouraging and satisfactory visits with you. I can't tell you how thrilled all of us are because of the gallant defence of the Soviet armies. I am confident that ways will be found to provide the material and supplies necessary to fight Hitler

> on all fronts, including your own. I want particularly to take this occasion to express my great confidence that your armies will ultimately prevail over Hitler and to assure you of our great determination to be of every possible material assistance.

Hitler had the text of this letter released throughout the Americas; he also, to the intense irritation of Roosevelt, amended the president's salutation to 'My Dear Friend Stalin'; and where Roosevelt had prudently concluded with 'Yours very sincerely,' the German propaganda text ended with an oily 'In cordial friendship.'

Roosevelt had long gone beyond strict neutrality. On September 11 he had ordered the navy to 'shoot on sight' any warships of the Axis powers encountered in seas 'the protection of which is necessary for American defence.' Admiral Raeder implored the Führer to permit German warships to meet force with force; but Hitler remained unconvinced that the military advantages would outweigh the political risks involved in firing back on any U.S. naval attackers.

ON OCTOBER 7 the first snow drifted out of the sky onto Hitler's headquarters. 'The weather gods,' wrote General Guderian privately four days later, 'have made monkeys out of us: first rain, then blizzards yesterday morning, frost in the afternoon and at night, and thawing again today. The roads are bottomless and our progress is obviously suffering.' On the sixteenth a fighter pilot arriving at the Führer's headquarters to receive the Knight's Cross announced that six inches of snow was covering the whole countryside.

On the seventeenth the temperature at Leningrad fell to freezing, in the far north it was 27°F below. The next day for the first time the weather was so bad as to prevent any noticeable change in the front lines. Bock's army group was paralysed by the snow, slush, and slime. Nothing could move except on foot or in the lightest of handcarts, for the roads were few and far between and it was on these that the Russians now concentrated their defence. Each night the temperatures fell and froze the snow and mud; each morning the thaw set in, and the roads were again impassable.

As the German troops struggled to advance through this filth and slush they encountered mournful columns of Russians trudging westward into captivity. 'The columns of Russian prisoners moving on the roads looked like half-witted herds of animals,' one of Canaris's aides noted. Barely guarded and kept in order by the fist and whip, these wretched prisoners

marched until they were exhausted by hunger or disease; they were then carried by their comrades or left at the roadside. 'The Sixth Army [Reichenau's] has ordered that all prisoners that break down are to be shot. Regrettably this is done at the roadside, even in the villages, so that the local population are eye-witnesses of these incidents. . . The population,' the report continued, 'greet the German soldiers as liberators from the yoke of Bolshevism. But there is a danger that this extremely useful mood, which is displayed by their great hospitality and many gifts, will turn into the opposite if dealt with wrongly.'

The first big SS action against the Jews at Kiev had occurred at the end of September. The report to Canaris by the previously mentioned aide noted: 'Orders are that the Jews are to be "resettled." This takes place as follows: the Jews are ordered at short notice to report to specific collecting points with their best clothes and their jewellery on the following night. No distinctions are made as to class, sex, or age. They are then taken to a preselected and prepared site outside the town concerned, where they have to deposit their jewellery and clothes under the pretext of having to complete certain formalities. They are led away from the road and liquidated. The effects on the German squads are inevitable – the executions can usually only be carried out under the influence of alcohol. The native population react to this liquidation programme, of which they are fully aware, calmly and sometimes with satisfaction, and the Ukrainian militia actually take part.' There were even protests that some Jews were escaping the net cast by the SS task forces.

The origins of the Kiev pogrom are obscure.

Whatever the origin, on the last two days of September, 33,771 Russian Jews were executed here. One month later the figure had risen to 75,000. Why was it happening? There are documents which strongly suggest that Hitler's responsibility – as distinct from Himmler's – was limited to the decision to deport all European Jews to the east, and that responsibility for what happened to Russian Jews and to European Jews after their arrival in 'the east' rested with Himmler, Heydrich, and the local authorities there. On September 18, 1941, Himmler wrote to Arthur Greiser, the brutal gauleiter of the Wartheland – that is, the Polish territories annexed in the German invasion two years earlier:

> The Führer wishes the old Reich territory and the Protectorate [of Bohemia-Moravia] to be cleansed and rid of Jews, from west to east, as

> soon as possible. As a first step I am therefore endeavouring to transport – this year as far as possible – all the Jews of the old Reich and Protectorate into the eastern territories annexed by the Reich in 1939 first of all; next spring they will then be deported still further eastward.

The first sixty thousand, Himmler advised, would be sent to the Lodz ghetto soon to spend the winter there. Heydrich would be in charge of this 'migration of the Jews.' Evidently the second phase, dumping them into Russia itself, could not be begun until the Russian campaign was finished and the military pressure on the railroads was relaxed.

Hitler's own attitude is illuminated by an incident at this time.

Learning that the Soviets were deporting about 400,000 Volga Germans, and even liquidating thousands of them, Reichsleiter Rosenberg proposed 'transporting all the Jews from Central Europe' into the newly occupied eastern territories as a reprisal, and on September 14 he directed his liaison officer Otto Bräutigam to get Hitler's consent.

General Bodenschatz, according to Bräutigam's diary, believed that transport difficulties would prevent such an operation: 'Finally,' wrote Bräutigam, however, 'I ran into Colonel Schmundt and to my great surprise he [said] that it was a very important and urgent matter that the Führer would certainly take a great interest in.' Hitler directed that Ribbentrop's opinion be sought. On the twentieth Baron Adolf von Steengracht, Ribbentrop's representative, submitted the foreign ministry's opinion on the Soviet deportation of the Volga Germans and 'countermeasures against Jews in the occupied eastern territories.' He had to record afterward, 'The Führer has not yet decided,' and the next day Koeppen recorded that Hitler had decided to reserve reprisals against the Jews 'for the eventuality of an American declaration of war.'

Seeing him two days later Dr. Goebbels wrote in his diary only: 'The Führer's opinion is that bit by bit the Jews must be got out of Germany altogether.' Hitler's bald decision was documented in many memoranda over the next months: thus on February 10, 1942, Section D III of the foreign ministry would state: 'The war against the Soviet Union has meanwhile made it possible to make other territories available for the Final Solution [i.e., the deportation of all Jews from Europe]. Accordingly the Führer has decided that the Jews are to be dumped [*abgeschoben*] not in Madagascar but in the East.' Himmler himself would dictate these words to SS-Gruppenführer Gottlob Berger on July 28, 1942: 'The occupied east-

ern territories* are being rid of the Jews [*judenfrei*]. The Führer has rested the execution of this very grave order upon my shoulders. Accordingly nobody can deprive me of the responsibility for this.'

Whatever Hitler himself had understood by *judenfrei*, the endemic Russian Jews had few champions among his subordinates. There was almost no German army opposition to their summary liquidation – even Manstein regarded it as a salutary preventive measure, wiping out the reservoirs of possible partisans before they became active. Reichenau justified it as part of the German mission to rid Europe permanently of the 'Asiatic Jewish danger.' In a message to his troops he proclaimed:

> In the east each soldier is not only a warrior abiding by the usual rules of war, but also the uncompromising bearer of a pure German ideal and the avenger of the bestialities committed against Germans and related races.
>
> This is why the soldier must understand why we have to exact a harsh but just retribution from the Jewish sub-humans. This serves the added purpose of stifling at birth uprisings in the rear of the Wehrmacht, since experience shows that these are always conceived by Jews. . .

Hitler considered the proclamation 'excellent,' and Quartermaster General Eduard Wagner circulated it to other commands as an example.

No direct report by Himmler or Heydrich to Hitler on the barbarous massacres of Russian Jews that they themselves had witnessed has ever come to light. At supper on October 5, for example, Himmler, who had just returned from an extended tour of the Ukraine during which he had visited Kiev, Nikolaiev, and Cherson, related to Hitler his impressions of Kiev. Werner Koeppen, who was a guest at Hitler's table that evening, recorded Himmler's comments: 'In Kiev . . . the number of inhabitants is still very great. The people look poor and proletarian, so that we could "easily dispense with 80 or 90 percent of them!"' 'All the Jews are to be removed,' Hitler stated over lunch on the fifth, referring to those still within the Reich. 'And not just to the Generalgouvernement [Poland] but right on to the east. It is only our pressing need for war transport that stops us doing so right now.' (Koeppen took the note.)

* What Himmler understood by the phrase 'eastern territories' is apparent from the letter to Greiser dated September 18, 1941, quoted earlier, page 447.

Himmler drew freely on this higher authority for his operations. To Friedrich Uebelhör, the unhappy governor of the city of Lodz where the sixty thousand Jews from the Reich were being dumped, Himmler wrote brusquely on the tenth that this was 'the Führer's will.' Hitler's surviving adjutants, secretaries, and staff stenographers have *all* testified, both under penetrating post-war interrogation and in interviews with this author, that never once was any extermination of either the Russian or European Jews mentioned – even confidentially – at his headquarters. Colonel Rudolf Schmundt appears to have suspected what was going on; for when Hitler's movie cameraman Walter Frentz accompanied Himmler to Minsk on an outing with stage designer Benno von Arent, he found himself the horrified witness of a mass open-air execution on August 17; Schmundt counselled him to destroy the one colour photograph he took, and 'not to poke his nose into matters that did not concern him.'

BY MID-October 1941, despite the foul weather, Hitler was still fired with optimism. On the thirteenth he began laying the foundations for a Nazi version of a united Europe. Hewel wrote, 'Reich foreign minister visits the Führer; first thoughts on a European manifesto. Probably in the economic sphere first of all, and probably at the beginning of the winter. Führer is in very best and relaxed mood.' Over dinner he revealed that he had been thinking of calling together the economic experts of Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, Sweden, and Finland. 'All those who have a feeling for Europe can join in this work,' he said, meaning the colonisation of the east. When Todt and Gauleiter Fritz Sauckel dined with Hitler on October 17, they were brimming with everything they had just seen in the east. Again Hitler dreamed aloud of the vast construction projects whereby he would open up the east. 'Above all we must lay roads,' Koeppen wrote that night, describing the dinner conversation:

> He told Dr. Todt he must expand his original projects considerably. For this purpose he will be able to make use of the three million prisoners for the next twenty years. The major roads – the Führer spoke today not only of the highway to the Crimea but also of one to the Caucasus and of two or three through the more northern territories – must be laid across the areas of greatest scenic beauty. Where the big rivers are crossed, German cities must arise, as centres of the Wehrmacht, police, administration, and Party authorities. Along these roads will lie the German

> farmsteads, and soon the monotonous steppe, with its Asiatic appearance, will look very different indeed. In ten years four million Germans will have settled there, and in twenty years at least ten million. They will come not only from the Reich but above all from America, and from Scandinavia, Holland, and Flanders too. And the rest of Europe shall play its part in this opening up of the Russian wastes as well. . .
>
> The Führer then reverted to the theme that 'contrary to what some people think' no education or welfare is to be laid on for the native population. Knowledge of the road signs will suffice, there will be no call for German schoolmasters there. By 'freedom' the Ukrainians understood that instead of twice they now had to wash only once a month – the Germans with their scrubbing brushes would soon make themselves unpopular there.
>
> He as Führer would set up his new administration there after ice-cool calculations: what the Slavs might think about it would not put him out one bit. Nobody who ate German bread today got worked up about the fact that in the twelfth century the granaries east of the Elbe were regained by the sword.
>
> Here in the east we were repeating a process for a second time not unlike the conquest of America. For climatic reasons alone we could not venture further south than the Crimea – he did not mention the Caucasus at this point – even now hundreds of our mountain troops on Crete had malaria! The Führer kept repeating that he wished he was ten or fifteen years younger so he could live through the rest of this process.

At the same time, the next phase of the deportation of Europe's Jews began. The evidence is that Hitler's intention was twofold – to establish a Jewish labour force for his grandiose plans in the east, and to hold them hostage. (The 'Jewish hostage' motif appears again late in 1943.*) There was still no word of massacring them.

Hitherto Adolf Eichmann, one of Himmler's leading experts on Jewish affairs, had held regular conferences on the various problems associated with the 'Madagascar plan' – for example, the re-education of professional Jews into the labourers, farmers, and artisans that would be needed in the new island-state. On October 18 however Himmler scribbled on his tele-

* In October 1943 Hitler forbade the liquidation of Rome's Jews.

phone pad the message he had just dictated to Heydrich: 'No emigration by Jews to overseas.' On the fifteenth the big exodus from central Europe to the territories farther east had begun. 'In daily transports of a thousand people, 20,000 Jews and 5,000 gypsies are being sent to the Lodz ghetto between October 15 and November 8,' Heydrich confirmed to him on the nineteenth. Five trainloads of Jews were herded out of Berlin, initially into the Lodz ghetto. Albert Speer was pleased, as he wanted their empty apartments to house the city's slum clearance families.

For the time being Himmler kept the Jews alive for the work they could perform; but farther east the gauleiters had no intention of preserving the unemployable Jews: a letter dated October 25 in SS files states that Eichmann had now approved Gauleiter Lohse's proposal that those arriving at Riga should be killed by mobile gas trucks. This initially *ad hoc* operation gathered momentum. Soon the Jews from the Lodz ghetto and Greiser's territories were being deported farther east – to the camp at Chelmno. There were 152,000 Jews involved in all, and Chelmno began liquidating them on December 8. It is possible to be specific about the instigators, because on May 1, 1942 Greiser himself would mention in a letter to Himmler that the current 'special treatment' programme of the hundred thousand Jews in his own gau had been authorised by Himmler 'with the agreement of' Heydrich. Hitler was not mentioned.

Meanwhile, from mid-November 1941 onward, the Reichsbahn sent trainloads of Jews – rounded up in Vienna, Brünn (Brno), Bremen, and Berlin – direct to Minsk, while others went to Warsaw, Kovno, and Riga. At Kovno and Riga the Jews were shot soon after. At Minsk the German Jews survived at first, but not for long: the Nazis liquidated 35,000 of the native Russian Jews at Minsk to make space for the newcomers, who were housed in a separate ghetto, the 'Hamburg Ghetto' – indicating the city that the first consignment had come from. A degree of misplaced smugness prevailed among the newcomers, according to Hersh Smolar, the Jewish-Communist resistance leader. Oberscharführer Scheidel, the ghetto's SS overseer, boasted to them: 'I made room for you by getting rid of 35,000 Russian Jews.' The original intention was that unlike the *Ostjuden*, the German Jews were to start new lives here in the East. Intercepted police messages confirm that each train was well provisioned with food, money, and 'appliances' (*Gerät*) both for the journey and for the first weeks after their arrival. Wilhelm Kube, Rosenberg's general commissioner of White Ruthenia, would record on July 31, 1942, that ten thousand had been liqui-

dated since the twenty-eighth, 'of which 6,500 were Russian Jews, old folk, women and children, with the rest unemployable Jews largely sent to Minsk from Vienna, Brünn, Bremen, and Berlin in November last year on the Führer's order.' Himmler's handwritten telephone notes mention one talk with Heydrich on November 17, 1941, about 'getting rid of the Jews'; twelve days later Heydrich circulated invitations to an inter-ministerial conference on the Final Solution of the Jewish Problem – delayed until January 1942, it became notorious as the Wannsee Conference.

NO DOCUMENTARY evidence exists that Hitler was aware of what was befalling the deported Jews. His remarks, noted by Bormann's adjutant Heinrich Heim late on October 25, 1941, indicate that he did not: 'From the rostrum of the Reichstag I prophesied to Jewry that if war could not be avoided, the Jews would disappear from Europe. That race of criminals already had on its conscience the two million dead of the Great War, and now it has hundreds of thousands more. Let nobody tell me that despite that we cannot park them in the marshy parts of Russia! Our troops are there as well, and who worries about them! By the way – it's not a bad thing that the panic precedes us that we're planning to exterminate Jews.' Hitler added however that, just as he was postponing the final reckoning with the turbulent Bishop von Galen until later, 'with the Jews too I have found myself remaining inactive. There's no point adding to one's difficulties at a time like this.' Hans Lammers testified later that this was undoubtedly Hitler's policy; Hitler had confirmed this to him, saying: 'I don't want to be bothered with the Jewish problem again until the war is over.'

In most circumstances Hitler was a pragmatist. It would have been unlike him to sanction the use of scarce transport space to move millions of Jews east for no other purpose than liquidating them there; nor would he willingly destroy manpower, for which his industry was crying out. Heinrich Heim recalls one exasperated comment by Hitler, told that Allied radio had broadcast an announcement that the Jews were being exterminated: 'Really, the Jews should be *grateful* to me for wanting nothing more than a bit of hard work from them.' Be that as it may, after Dr. Goebbels published a singularly heartless leading article in *Das Reich* in mid-November entitled 'The Jews are to Blame,' Hitler, in Berlin for the funeral of Luftwaffe general Ernst Udet, again urged Dr. Goebbels to modify his policy toward the Jews into one that, as Goebbels noted his words, 'does not cause us endless difficulties,' and he instructed the propaganda minister to show greater

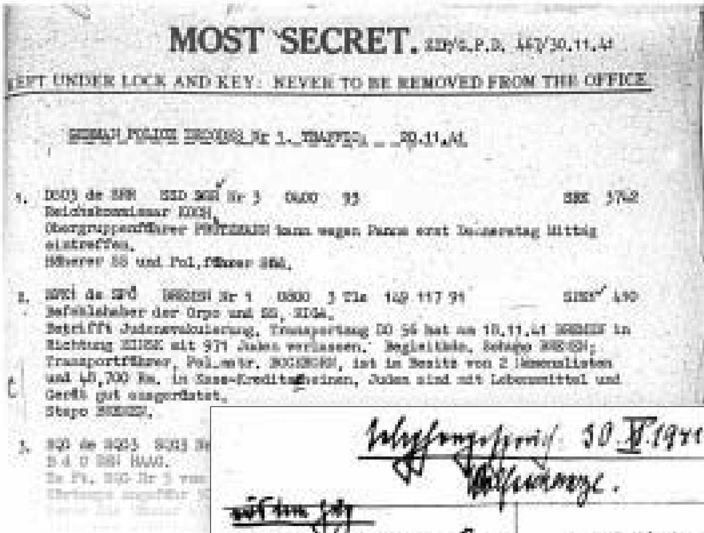
humanity toward mixed marriages. Goebbels characteristically began this entry, dated November 22, with the words, 'On the Jewish problem too the Führer is totally in agreement with my opinions,' but clearly he was not.

It was Heydrich and the fanatical gauleiters in the east who were interpreting with murderous thoroughness Hitler's brutal decree that the Jews must 'finally disappear' from Europe. Himmler's personal role is ambivalent. On November 30, 1941 he took his train over to the Wolf's Lair for a secret 'bunker' conference with Hitler, at which the fate of a trainload of 1,035 Berlin Jews was evidently on the agenda. A page from the Himmler file in the Moscow archives lists the Reichsführer's appointments for that day. He received SS Sturmbannführer Gunther d'Alquèn, a Goebbels journalist, from midday to one P.M. (to 'report on trip to SS Police Division and Death's-Head Division'); he worked for an hour ('*gearbeitet*'), received General Dietl for a half-hour conference about an SS brigade on the Murmansk front, and lunched until four P.M. with Hitler ('*Mittagessen b. Führer*'). Himmler's all-important telephone notes, recorded on a different sheet, show that at 1:30 P.M. he spoke by telephone from 'the bunker' – that is, Hitler's bunker – to Heydrich and dictated the explicit order that the Berlin trainload of Jews was not to be liquidated.*

The extermination programme had however gained a momentum of its own. The Goebbels article had been taken as a sign from the highest level. In fact, nobody needed any orders or written authority. There could be no clearer proof that the former Führer-State had become a state without a Führer. Five thousand Jews, including the trainload which had left Berlin three days before, the seventh to leave the capital city, had already been plundered of their valuables and shot to death in pits at Skirotawa, a few miles outside Riga, by nine A.M. that same morning, November 30.

The different roles of the SS, the army, and Hitler's headquarters in this massacre are now well documented. The 1,035 German Jews, expelled from Berlin by train, had arrived outside Riga that morning in sub-zero temperatures, and they were shot out of hand even before the trucks loaded with four thousand Jews from Riga arrived and met the same fate. When

* Himmler's original note on his telephone conversations of November 30, 1941, is printed as a facsimile (with revlevant British code intercepts) opposite. Before this author these notes in the late 1960s, no other historian had troubled to do so. Himmler's agenda for the same day, November 30, 1941, came into the author's hands in May 1998.



MOST SECRET. ZIP/G.P.D. 463/30.11.41

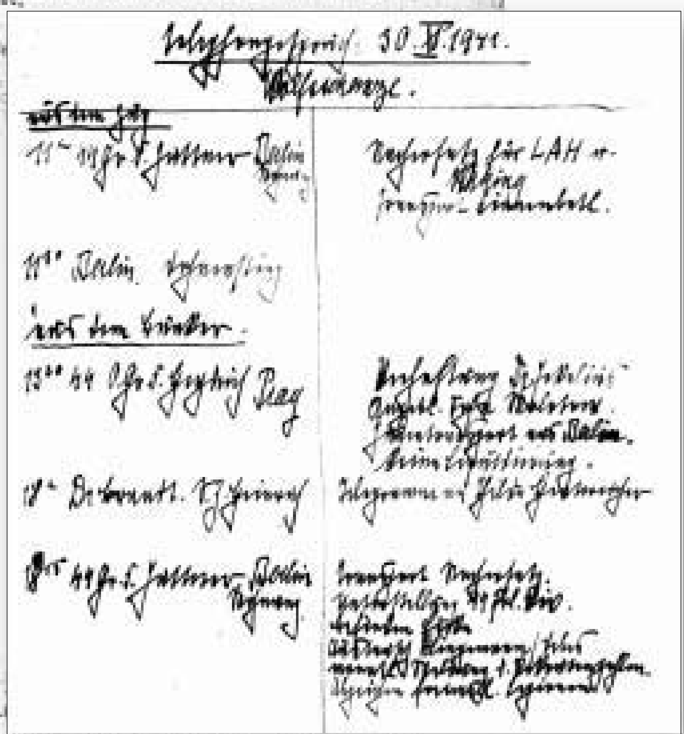
KEPT UNDER LOCK AND KEY: NEVER TO BE REMOVED FROM THE OFFICE.

GERMAN POLICE DECODES Nr 1 TRAFFIC: [illegible] 30.11.41

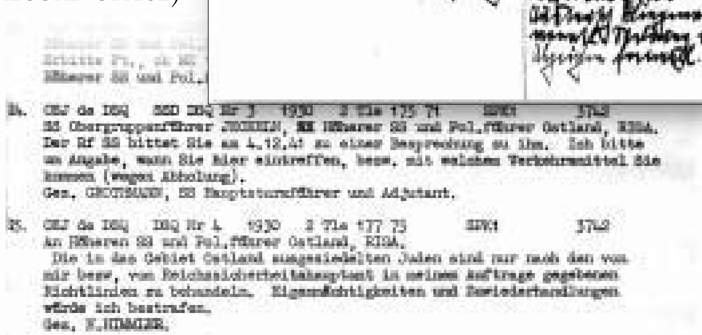
1. [illegible] Nr 3 0400 33 [illegible] 3742
Reichskommissar KOCH,
Obergruppenführer PRÜTZMANN kann wegen Panne erst Donnerstag Mittag eintreffen.
Höherer SS und Pol.führer Süd.

2. [illegible] BREMEN Nr 1 0800 3 Tle 142 117 91 [illegible] 490
Befehlshaber der Orpo und SD, RIGA.
Betrifft Judenevakuierung. Transportzug DO 56 hat am 18.11.41 BREMEN in Richtung MINSK mit 971 Juden verlassen. Begleitkdo. Schupo BREMEN; Transportführer, Pol.mstr. [illegible], ist im Besitz von 2 Namenslisten und 48,700 Rm. in Kassa-Kreditscheinen. Juden sind mit Lebensmittel und Gerät gut ausgerüstet.
Stapo BREMEN.

3. [illegible] HAAG.
[illegible]



British code intercepts reveal that well provisioned trainloads of Jews are being sent to the east from German cities. But something goes awry; from Hitler's bunker Himmler tells Heydrich – see right – to halt one massacre, and the next day (below) he orders the chief SS murderer at Riga to see him (PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE)



34. [illegible] Nr 3 1930 2 Tle 175 71 [illegible] 3742
SS Obergruppenführer JECKELN, SS Höherer SS und Pol.führer Ostland, RIGA.
Der RF SS bittet Sie am 4.12.41 zu einer Besprechung zu ihm. Ich bitte um Angabe, wann Sie hier eintreffen, bezw. mit welchem Verkehrsmittel Sie kommen (wegen Abholung).
Gez. GROTHMANN, SS Hauptsturmführer und Adjutant.

35. [illegible] Nr 4 1930 2 Tle 177 75 [illegible] 3742
An Höheren SS und Pol.führer Ostland, RIGA.
Die in das Gebiet Ostland ausgesiedelten Juden sind nur nach den von mir bezw. vom Reichssicherheitshauptamt in meinem Auftrage gegebenen Richtlinien zu behandeln. Eigenmächtigkeiten und Zuwiderhandlungen würde ich bestrafen.
Gez. H.HIMMLER.

Colonel Walther Bruns, a local army engineer-officer, learned a few hours earlier that he was about to lose his Jewish work-force he weakly protested to the city's German mayor Hugo Wittrock and to his SS *Stabsleiter*, Werner Altemeyer, a baby-faced young SS officer with ash-blond hair and grey-blue eyes – then drove out to witness the liquidations in progress for himself. Four years later he still recalled the coarse yelling of the gunmen; he could still see in his mind's eye one of the victims, a 'raving beauty' in a flame-red blouse.

'I sent two officers out there, one still alive today,' Bruns whispered secretly to fellow prisoners in April 1945, 'because I wanted witnesses. I didn't tell them what was going on. "Go to the Forest of Skirotawa," I said, "take a good look at what's going on, and write it up for me."' Bruns protested to his superior, General Alfred Jacob, chief of the army engineers, at Army HQ at Angerburg: 'I attached an official letter [to the officer's report] and took it over to Jacob myself. He said, "We've already received a couple of protests from engineer battalions in the Ukraine."' The same kind of liquidations had started there. Jacob added, 'We couldn't really figure out how to bring it to the Führer's attention. Let's do it via Canaris.'

Vice-Admiral Canaris, recalled Bruns, had 'the rotten job of hanging around for the right moment to drop gentle hints to the Führer.'

Inescapable for an independent historian in this sordid tale is the cowardice of Bruns and his army superiors, none of whom was eager to sign his own name to the report to the Führer. Hitler's headquarters – far from having issued the order, as Altemeyer had claimed – at once intervened to order a halt to these mass shootings.

Two weeks later, Bruns visited the mayor on another matter. Altemeyer was there too and bragged that an order had now come down that there were to be no more such 'mass shootings,' adding the snide comment: '*Das soll vorsichtiger gemacht werden*' – it's to be done more circumspectly.

On the day after the shootings, December 1, Himmler again telephoned Heydrich at about one P.M., this time explicitly about the 'executions at Riga.'

Somebody – and this can only have been Hitler himself – had reprimanded Himmler, because that same day, the Reichsführer sent not one but two radio messages to his SS police commander at Riga, SS Obergruppenführer Friedrich Jeckeln, warning of punishments for any further arbitrary and disobedient acts ('*Eigenmächtigkeiten und Zuwiderhandlungen*') which contravened the guidelines laid down 'by myself or by the

Reichssicher- heitshauptamt on my orders' on how to deal with the Jews who were being 'out-placed to the Ostland [Baltic provinces].'*

Himmler ordered Jeckeln, the recalcitrant mass-murderer, to report to his headquarters forthwith; their interview took place on the fourth, and for many months the multiple shootings of German Jews halted.

THE SIGNIFICANCE of this appalling episode can hardly be under-estimated. The killings on this scale had simply begun, without orders from the highest level. There were never any such orders. Younger German historians, still groping for the truth at the end of this ghastly century, willingly declare that Hitler 'must have' announced his decision to put to death all Jews within his reach in a secret two-hour address to the fifty-odd gauleiters and Reichsleiters in Berlin on December 12, 1941, the day after he declared war on the United States. If he did, it did not occur to any of the gauleiters to report the historic fact either at the time, in private papers, or afterwards in captivity. Even Goebbels, who had urged Hitler to address the party leaders while in Berlin, noted only that 'as regards the Jewish problem the Führer is determined to make a clean sweep.' For the *nth* time the vicious little propaganda minister recalled in his diary that 1939 speech in which Hitler had prophesied that Europe's Jews would be destroyed if they brought about another world war. 'That was not just an empty phrase,' dictated Goebbels. 'The world war is upon us, and the destruction of the Jews [*des Judentums*] must be the inevitable consequence. Let's look at the problem without any sentimentality.' Germany's older historians, less fearful than their younger colleagues of their country's modern and repugnant penal measures against divergent historical research, ridicule the idea that Hitler's speech was anything more than a tiresome and hackneyed routine.

The lackadaisical tone of these events in Berlin is accurately conveyed by Reichsminister Hans Frank's private papers. Announcing to his Generalgouvernement cabinet on December 16 that Heydrich was calling an important conference in January, on the expulsion of Europe's Jews to the east, Frank irritably exclaimed, 'Do you imagine they're going to be housed in neat estates in the Baltic provinces! In Berlin' – and with Hitler back in East Prussia this can only be taken as a reference to Heydrich's agencies – 'they

* We have the assiduous work of the British codebreakers to thank for our knowledge of these two revealing top secret messages, which were ignored until recently by scholars.

tell us: why the cavilling? We've got no use for them either. . . Liquidate them yourselves!'

At about this time, Dr. Goebbels issued a secret directive to editors forbidding them to use the word 'liquidation' in connection with the Nazis' 'summary executions in the east.' The word was to be reserved, he defined, for the crimes committed by the Soviets.

Historians have searched, and will search, in vain for a clear directive for what has been called since the early 1970s 'the Holocaust.' Taken in the context of the increasingly savage guerrilla war raging behind the eastern front, even the topic which Himmler jotted down on his recently discovered agenda for a further meeting with Hitler in East Prussia on December 18, 1941 ('Jewish problem') cannot be safely interpreted as referring to the European context, particularly given what was quite possibly Hitler's decision as recorded by the Reichsführer at the time: '*Als Partisanen auszurotten*' – root out, or wipe out, like partisans.

BY MID-October 1941, Moscow's fate seemed sealed. Guderian had written home optimistically on the eleventh: 'We think we've now destroyed the bulk of the Russian army. What's left can't be much good. But,' he added cautiously, 'we mustn't count our chickens – war often produces ugly surprises.'

A few days later the first such surprise hit them, an unusually early winter. 'The natives say it's never come this early in thirty years,' Guderian complained on October 15, and added: 'Our troops don't have winter clothing yet; and there's no antifreeze for the motor transport; the horses have no stables.' Bad weather hit the southern sector too. 'I'm none too happy with our operations,' wrote Field Marshal von Rundstedt to his family on the fourteenth. 'The weather's put a stop to everything.'

In the centre Bock's army group foundered in an unprecedented autumn morass of mud, rain, and slush. Trucks sank up to their axles and had to be winched out. Of half a million vehicles, suddenly the German army lost 150,000.

The enemy was fighting only a few miles from his arms factories and arsenals. As they had withdrawn, they had methodically ripped up every railway track and tie. The Luftwaffe's deputy chief of staff General Hoffmann von Waldau, who had confidently predicted on October 10: 'As long as the weather does not continue to deteriorate the enemy will not be able to prevent us from encircling Moscow,' followed this with a frustrated entry

six days later: 'Our wildest dreams have been washed out by rain and snow. . . Everything is bogged down in a bottomless quagmire. The temperature drops to 11°, a foot of snow falls, and then it rains on top of the snow.'

Thus Hitler's bold hopes for the *rapid* overthrow of Stalin's regime were thwarted by the weather.

Over lunch on October 26, he asked to what extent the army's quartermaster had provisioned the eastern armies with winter gear.

During the summer Hitler had continually reminded Wagner to see to the army's winter needs. Wagner's private letters indicate that he had only addressed himself to the problem on October 19; but now he assured Hitler that by October 30 both Leeb and Rundstedt would have received half their winter equipment, while the numerically far bigger Army Group Centre would have received one-third. (He mentioned that the Russians' destruction of the one railway along the Sea of Azov would delay supplies to the south.) 'The Führer was extremely nice and friendly to me,' wrote Wagner.

In fact, the General Staff were more optimistic than Hitler. On October 29, Wagner noted that an enemy pipeline had been captured, still spewing forth gasoline, and this would enable the tanks to press on into Rostov. 'Everything else is also moving again, and we're convinced we'll shortly finish off Moscow.'

Winter however was unmistakably closing in: on October 30, Admiral Canaris flew in to Rastenburg, his plane almost colliding with another in the fog. Hitler ran into him on the way to the map room and asked what weather Canaris had seen at the front. Canaris told him 'Bad!' and Hitler gestured with annoyance.

The next day snow settled on the Wolf's Lair too. On November 1, Hitler spent an hour at General Staff headquarters, inspecting for himself the winter equipment. Wagner noted: 'He looked at and listened closely to everything; he appeared fresh and lively and was in a good mood.'

A mood of restlessness and annoyance beset the Führer however. Already 150,000 men had died since 'Barbarossa' began; a war like this was bound to disrupt the national metabolism. He knew – from radio intercepts – that Churchill was moving heaven and earth to start shipments of arms to Archangel. Hitler hoped that one day the British people's opposition to Churchill's war policies would cause his undoing. This was the reason he gave Colonel Wilhelm Speidel for rejecting the French offers of collaboration – that it would stand in the way of the later concord with Britain.

When Raeder's Chief of Staff, Admiral Fricke, argued with compelling logic that Britain's military defeat was necessary for any New Order in Europe, and that this defeat could only be achieved by concentrating on the submarine war in the Atlantic, Hitler explained that he was even now ready to make peace with Britain, as the territory Germany had already won in Europe was adequate for the German people's future needs. 'Evidently,' the admiral reported, 'the Führer would be glad for Britain, once the eastern campaign is over, to show signs of common-sense (*not* that the Führer expects it of Churchill) even if it meant that Germany could not win further ground than she already occupies.'

The Mediterranean had quietly become one of the most vulnerable areas of Axis operations, particularly now that Mussolini's position was threatened by domestic unrest. Hitler sadly reflected that if he could capture Gibraltar it would solve the whole problem with one blow, but without Spain's consent this was impossible. As Rommel's supply predicament worsened, Hitler angrily complained that the Wehrmacht commanders had not kept him informed of the worsening situation in the Mediterranean; but this was not true, for Raeder had predicted this since early July and had demanded that Göring divert Luftwaffe units to safeguard the supply line to Tripoli.

In mid-October Hitler promised Mussolini in a letter that Göring would furnish Luftwaffe support. He explained to Admiral Fricke on the twenty-seventh: 'Any change of government in Italy would spell the end of the Fascist regime, and Italy would unquestionably cross into the enemy camp.' Large sections of the Italian public were pro-British. The defection of Italy would moreover lead to the loss of France as well, and hence the defection of Spain. The 'safeguarding of our Continental territory is now our first strategic commandment for the time being,' Hitler ordered. Because of this, the active war against Britain must be abandoned: the *Schwerpunkt* (focus) of U-boat operations must be moved from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean. In vain Fricke argued that now – with Russia on the verge of collapse – was no time to remove the noose from Britain's neck, and that Italy must do more to escort the supply convoys to Tripoli herself – either by sealing off the Straits of Sicily with minefields or by eliminating Malta.

In Hitler's view the risk to Italy, to the soft underbelly of Europe, was too real to let the rot in the Mediterranean go on.

A Test of Endurance

In Stalin, Hitler unquestionably now knew, he had met his match. As the Soviet Union's resistance hardened, despite each fresh catastrophe inflicted on its armies, Hitler's admiration for his Bolshevik adversary grew. 'This Stalin is obviously also a great man,' he told his baffled generals. 'To claim anything else would not make sense. Historians of the future will have to set out from the fact that today's events are governed by the collision or collusion of great, towering personalities whose paths cross like this only once in many centuries.'

The Wehrmacht had captured over three million Russian prisoners. The Soviet Union had lost most of its aluminium, manganese, pig iron, and coal resources. As soon as Hitler's armies could penetrate beyond Rostov into the Caucasus, Stalin would lose 90 percent of his oil as well. In Moscow tens of thousands of people were being evacuated. Some of those who had to stay in the capital tried to obtain swastika flags and German dictionaries in anticipation of the city's capture. But for the first two weeks of November the German armies were held immobile by the mud and more.

There were those generals – Erich Hoepner among them – who bitterly criticised their army superiors for not giving the panzer *Gruppen* their head in the October offensive; this over-cautiousness, bordering on defeatism, had deprived Hoepner of the chance of destroying all the Russian reserve forces as well. Now these reserves, augmented by workers from the Moscow factories and freshly arrived Siberian divisions – magnificently equipped with winter gear – were pouring into the capital's defences.

Germany had still suffered no military reverses, and this was a position of strength from which Hitler was willing to envisage offering peace terms to the enemy. In early November, Ribbentrop's diplomatic seismographs detected signs that the Führer wanted peace. Etzdorf, Ribbentrop's liaison

officer to the General Staff, listed them thus: 'Ambassador von Bergen is to be replaced at the Vatican by a more active personality, one better able to monitor the peace possibilities coming through there. Everything relating to peace in the [foreign] press is to be carefully collected and immediately submitted. The same procedure is to be followed with regard to Russia's domestic situation.' Weizsäcker held out no hope of peace, however. He told Halder that there was no evidence that Britain was inclined toward a cessation of hostilities; he felt that any moves initiated by Germany would be rebuffed.

By the end of the month Hitler knew Weizsäcker was right. British foreign office instructions to ridicule any 'peace offensive' by Hitler reached German hands. 'The present peace offensive,' this document emphasised, 'comes not, as it was intended to do, at a moment of victory over Russia, but when Germany is further away from victory than at any previous time.' Hitler reminded one minister arriving in Berlin for the fifth anniversary of the Anti-Comintern Pact that Lord Halifax had once bragged of being 'a strong enough man' to ignore the countless letters from all over England demanding peace in 1940; this was proof, said Hitler, that the 'Jewish-Bolshevik' suicidal forces still had the upper hand in London. Wistfully he added that what irritated him most was that 'that cretin Churchill' was interrupting him in his mighty task of cultural reconstruction.

For Hitler, the thrills of war-making had long palled; but not for the generals. Halder's private letters home proudly revelled in the advances 'his' army had achieved. Halder commanded Bock's army group to delay its Moscow offensive until the logistics build-up would support a far more ambitious offensive: the Ninth Army would lunge far beyond Moscow toward Kalinin, the Volga reservoir, and Selizharovo; the Third and Fourth Panzer Gruppen would make for Vologda, and Guderian's Second Panzer Army was even assigned Gorki as its final objective for the winter. Hitler pocketed his doubts and approved the plans. On November 11 Jodl signed a directive to the army groups setting out these far-flung ambitions to be achieved before the heavy snowfalls began. Halder stoutly defended these aims at a staff conference in Orsha on November 13 – optimistically counting on six weeks' campaigning before winter really closed in. Neither Bock nor Rundstedt would hear of such distant objectives; thus a limited advance on Moscow only was finally approved. Had Halder's grand strategy been adopted, Hitler would undoubtedly have lost his entire eastern army in the catastrophe that shortly unfolded.

In fact Hitler was on the horns of a dilemma. He had postponed his assault on the main Caucasus oil fields until 1942; by that time they would probably have been destroyed. But he still showed a curious optimism. Halder wrote: 'All in all he gave an impression of anticipating that when both warring parties realise that they are incapable of destroying each other there will result a negotiated peace.' It was the vision of a second Verdun that kept recurring to Hitler; and the condescending notion that since Stalin had fought well and fearlessly, he should be spared the fate he no doubt otherwise deserved. There was an odd echo of this attitude in Hitler's remarks to his munitions minister, Fritz Todt, who returned from a tour of the Russian front on November 29, 1941 and summed up his prognosis thus: 'Given the arms and industrial supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon powers, we can no longer militarily win this war!' Hitler calmly inquired, 'How am I supposed to end it, then? I can't see much possibility of ending it *politically*.'

Even before 'Barbarossa,' Hitler had realised that German aircraft and tank production was inefficient. The aircraft industry was beset by prima-donna personalities and producing a plethora of outdated aircraft. General Ernst Udet, the director of air armament, recognised his share of the blame and shot himself in November. To succeed Udet, Hitler appointed Field Marshal Erhard Milch, Göring's bustling deputy; but it would be 1943 before Milch's appointment could have any real effect.

Tank design was different. Here Hitler considered himself an expert. By November 1941 he feared that the tank's useful offensive life would soon be over: this meant that the panzer divisions would have to complete Hitler's programme of territorial conquests quickly, which in turn meant building bigger tanks, and in greater quantity, than the British or Russians could. The huge Russian tank output had shaken him badly; when Todt now, on November 29, 1941, told him of two more Russian types that he had examined at Orel, Hitler exclaimed in exasperation, 'How can such a primitive people manage such technical achievements in such a short time!'

Nine months had passed since Hitler had called his own first tank-design symposium at the Berghof on February 18, 1941. Then he had demanded the modification of their tanks to mount much heavier calibre long-barrelled guns – 50 and 75 millimetres, respectively. On May 26 Hitler had demanded an even heavier gun in future tanks and instructed both the Henschel tank works and Professor Ferdinand Porsche to produce prototypes mounting the 88-millimetre heavy gun. The orthodox tank designers

were aghast, but Hitler pictured to them the 'morale and physical effect' of a direct hit by such a shell on a cast-steel tank turret – it would burst asunder, he said. At their conference on November 29, Hitler again warned Todt and Brauchitsch that the age of the tank would soon be past; he asked them to concentrate on three basic tank designs – a light tank for reconnaissance, like the present Mark III; a medium tank, the Mark IV; and a heavy tank (the later Panther) to outclass the Russian T-34.

In mid-November 1941 Field Marshal von Bock had resumed his drive toward Moscow. His northern wing began to move on the fifteenth, followed by the southern wing two days later. All Hitler's commanders had assured him that the Red Army lacked depth; but the enemy's resistance before Moscow was ominously vehement, and he began to suspect that he had again been wrongly advised. He bluntly told the ailing Field Marshal von Brauchitsch that it was a question of the army's *will* to victory. Meanwhile, General von Kleist's First Panzer Army had managed to seize Rostov on the Don. Sub-zero temperatures gripped the front. The tank engines refused to start, and Reichenau's Sixth Army had found comfortable winter quarters which they were very loath to leave. Ribbentrop came on the twenty-second, no doubt to discuss the big demonstration of European solidarity he was about to stage in Berlin. Hitler listened to Ribbentrop's speech on the radio. It was an important address to the ambassadors and foreign ministers of Germany's allies and friendly neutrals. Had the Soviet Union been on the brink of defeat it would have been timely and well-chosen; but Ribbentrop made the British government the butt of his leaden witticisms, goaded by the constant and effective British propaganda charge that he as Hitler's foreign minister was to blame for this war. Soon after, Ribbentrop himself phoned, asking if Hitler had liked his speech. The Führer had not, and he was still fulminating against the foreign ministry when his train left headquarters to take him to Berlin at seven P.M. that evening.

In Berlin a round of receptions for the new signatories of the Anti-Comintern Pact began. They made a curious bunch. The Hungarians had to be kept apart from the Romanians. Ciano was accorded the same frozen politeness as had been his lot on his recent visit to the Wolf's Lair. The Turks, who had also been invited to join the pact, had refused point-blank; from decoded British admiralty telegrams Hitler knew that Turkey was again playing a double role. Vichy France was not invited to join the pact, as Hitler still evidently hoped to treat with Britain some day at France's expense. A French volunteer legion was now fighting under Bock's command,

and from decoded American cables the Germans knew that Pétain had commended Germany for adhering to the armistice conditions. Hitler had kept his promises, and Pétain accordingly supported his plans for a New Order, from which he felt that France could only profit. But Hitler's latent resentment had its psychological roots too deep in recent history to be easily overcome, as his surly reply to a letter from the French marshal showed: Hitler said that Germany's recent execution of French 'Communists' in reprisal for the assassination of German officers doing their 'lawful duty' was fully justified. The Führer drew a passionate comparison between what he presented as Germany's restrained presence now in France and the French troops' unruly behaviour in the Rhineland between the wars, when they had driven German citizens from the sidewalks with their riding crops, and the rape of more than sixteen thousand German women had gone unpunished.

A major source of discontent in France was that Germany – like France after World War I – was still detaining over a million French prisoners of war. Hitler could not dispense with this labour force, for the German agricultural and armament economy relied heavily on prisoners. Albert Speer, Hitler's chief architect, asked him to provide Russian forced labour for his work in building a new Berlin. Speer lunched with him and showed him the latest scale-models of Berlin's new buildings – the vast Great Hall, the Office of the Reichsmarschall, and the new stadium. Hitler granted Speer's request for thirty thousand Russian prisoners to help in the construction work. The Führer assured Speer that no war was going to keep him from putting these plans into effect.

WHILE HE was in Berlin, on November 27, Hitler learned that the talks between Japan and the United States had broken down. He now had a private meeting with the Japanese ambassador, General Oshima, who tried unsuccessfully to warn him of the war that was coming; two weeks later Hitler admitted to his staff that he should have paid closer attention to the cautious hints that Oshima dropped.

The United States was evidently having second thoughts about fighting a war in Europe. Several American destroyers had recently been sunk by U-boats, but Roosevelt had shown little firm reaction. (As late as December 6, Hitler would be shown dispatches from Hans Thomsen, his chargé d'affaires in Washington, listing the reasons why the United States would not declare war yet. This firm evidence that Roosevelt now wanted to avoid

armed conflict until his rearmament was ready, persuaded Hitler that war between the United States and Japan might serve his purposes after all: it would tie this powerful enemy down in the Pacific at least throughout 1942.) The German attachés in Tokyo warned Berlin that Japan would enter the war before the year was out, and that Tokyo would shortly approach Germany for a pact binding each country not to make a separate peace with the United States so long as the other was still fighting. Sure enough, such a request was received by Ribbentrop on the eighteenth; he agreed 'in principle,' fearing that otherwise Japan might reach a compromise with the United States. For the next week the reports reaching Hitler were conflicting.

Then on November 28 he received a telegram from Hans Thomsen reporting that Cordell Hull had handed to the Japanese what amounted to an ultimatum which 'is bound to result in the immediate breakdown of the talks.' Hitler discussed the implications of this with his staff, then sent Ribbentrop to inform General Oshima that if Japan did reach a decision to fight 'Britain and the United States,' they must not hesitate, as it would be in the Axis interests. Oshima inquired in puzzlement whether he was to infer that Germany and the United States would soon be at war, and Ribbentrop replied, 'Roosevelt is a fanatic. There's no telling what he'll do.' Ribbentrop then gave the Japanese the assurance they had wanted: 'If Japan becomes engaged in war against the United States, Germany will of course join the war immediately. . . The Führer is adamant on that point.'

Ribbentrop does seem to have had doubts. On the train carrying them both back to East Prussia the next day, November 29, he asked Hitler what Germany's posture would be if Japan *attacked* the United States. Hitler cast diplomatic niceties aside; if Germany welched on Japan in the event of Japan's attacking the United States, it would be the end of the Tripartite Pact. 'The Americans are already shooting at us – so we are already at war with them.'

SOME DAYS passed before Hitler's attention was again called to Japan, for he was virtually incommunicado – touring his army headquarters on the tottering eastern front.

Only then was he shown the latest telegram from Tokyo. The Japanese had again asked for Germany and Italy to stand at her side. (Tokyo's secret instructions to Ambassador Oshima in Berlin were couched in even plainer terms: he was to inform Hitler and Ribbentrop confidentially that war between Japan and Anglo-Saxon powers might be ignited 'quicker than anybody

dreams'.) Oshima saw Ribbentrop forthwith, on December 2, and again the next day; but the foreign minister had to prevaricate because he could not reach the Führer. He evidently managed this late on December 4. That night he asked Rome to approve the German counterproposal for an agreement, and at four A.M. he handed to Oshima the agreed text of a German-Italian-Japanese treaty. This more than met Japan's requirements. 'Our view,' Ribbentrop cabled to his man in Tokyo, 'is that the Axis powers and Japan regard themselves as locked in one historic struggle.'

HITLER'S EYES were of course elsewhere. As winter closed in, barbarous fighting erupted everywhere on the Russian front, where the army's all-out assault on Moscow was beginning. The fighting was of unexampled savagery on both sides. A captured Russian battalion commander related what happened to three Waffen SS soldiers in his area: 'When the regiment's commissar, Zhukenin, of the 508th Infantry Regiment, asked an officer what he was fighting for, he replied, "For Hitler!" So the commissar kicked him in the groin and shot him.' Autopsy reports revealed that Russian troops defending the beleaguered Leningrad had resorted to cannibalism. German corpses found behind Russian lines lacked parts of their bodies, although the uniforms nearby were undamaged. The harsh winter took its toll.

While the Luftwaffe and SS were adequately provided with clothing for winter warfare, the German army's meagre winter supplies were still bottled up by the chaotic railroad system at Minsk and Smolensk far to the rear. German locomotives' external 'gossamer' of plumbing and pipework made them easy prey for the sub-zero winters. Instead of seventeen supply trains a day, each army on the Leningrad front was lucky to get one; instead of eighteen, Guderian's Second Panzer Army was getting only three.

When at last winter clothing did reach the fighting troops, it was useless against the Russian winter. Many weeks earlier Brauchitsch had paraded before Hitler a dozen soldiers outfitted with the army's special new winter gear. Only now did Hitler learn that those dozen outfits were all the army had. Meanwhile his armies were trapped in blizzards outside Moscow – and were slowly freezing to death.

The reverse suffered by the First Panzer Army at Rostov on the Don was a bitter pill for Hitler to swallow. An Intelligence report confirmed that his own original strategy was what the Soviets had feared most. Marshal Timoshenko had just delivered a secret speech to the supreme defence council in Moscow:

> If Germany succeeds in taking Moscow, that is obviously a grave disappointment for us, but it by no means disrupts our grand strategy. . . The only thing that matters is oil. As we remember, Germany kept harping on her own urgent oil problems in her economic bargaining with us from 1939 to 1941.
>
> So we have to do all we can (a) to make Germany increase her oil consumption, and (b) to keep the German armies out of the Caucasus.

The Red Army's task now, he said, was to throw the Germans back just far enough to destroy the caches of tanks and ammunition it had built up for the Caucasus offensive.

How Hitler must have cursed the General Staff for having foisted its Moscow campaign on to him. With winter upon him, he had no option but to see it through although the armies' reserves were at an end and the physical conditions were brutal in the extreme. How far the army faithfully called his attention to these adverse conditions is controversial even now. The two army group commanders, Bock and Rundstedt, believed that Hitler was not being told the blunt facts. 'We must face the melancholy fact,' Guderian wrote privately, 'that our superior command has overreached itself, it didn't want to believe our reports on the dwindling combat strength of our troops, it made one fresh demand after another, it made no provision for the harsh winter, and now it's been taken by surprise by the Russian temperatures of minus thirty degrees Fahrenheit. . . We in the army have to put up with horrifying bungling and aimlessness.'

This lack of *Zivilcourage* was first brought home to Hitler by the immediate sequel to the loss of Rostov. Kleist's frantic warnings about his long exposed left flank and the severe icing conditions were withheld from Hitler. When Kleist was forced to withdraw his spearhead, intending to fall back on the Mius, Hitler had on November 30 vetoed this: Rundstedt, the army group commander, was told to order Kleist to defend a line five miles forward of the Mius. In the course of the evening, Brauchitsch received Rundstedt's uncompromising refusal: 'If my superiors have no faith in my leadership, I must ask to be replaced as Commander in Chief.' Hitler sacked Rundstedt that same night.

Hitler backed this order with a personal visit to Kleist's battle headquarters at Mariupol (Zhdanov), on the Sea of Azov. He took no General Staff officers with him – just his adjutants. He had intended sacking Kleist, but SS General Sepp Dietrich, whose SS Life Guards Division had been in

the thick of the fighting, pluckily defended his superiors; Schmundt told Hitler that Kleist's Chief of Staff had now shown him copies of the panzer army's frantic signals before the Rostov operation. These messages had accurately predicted this very outcome. Hitler was astonished that they had been withheld from him. He exclaimed, 'So the panzer army saw it all coming and reported to that effect. It bears none of the blame, then.' He telephoned Jodl's staff in this vein on December 3: Kleist's panzer army bore none of the blame for the Rostov crisis. Clearly his messages had been suppressed by the General Staff. Thus Hitler's confidence in Rundstedt was restored – though characteristically of Hitler the dismissal remained in force.

THE ROSTOV setback paled into insignificance against what now occurred at Moscow. General Kluge's powerful Fourth Army had begun its big push on December 1 through the forests and swamps west of the capital. On December 2, fighting through snowstorms and blizzards, a reconnaissance battalion reached Khimki, on the very outskirts of Moscow; but it was driven back by armed Russian workers. This was the German army's trauma. Moscow was being evacuated; its streets and public buildings were being mined for demolition. Yet by December 4, with temperatures six degrees below zero Fahrenheit, both Hoepner's tanks and Kluge's infantry were at a standstill. Guderian, visiting the battlefield, found his tank crews still optimistic. But Field Marshal von Bock warned the OKW that his troops would soon be able to proceed no farther. 'If the attack is not called off,' he warned Jodl, 'it will be almost impossible to go over to the defensive.' On the fifth, Guderian – up at the forefront of his army with the 296th Infantry Division – realised that his own attack was hopeless too. His Chief of Staff recorded in his diary: 'Twenty-five degrees below zero this morning. Tank turrets frozen solid, frostbite taking heavy toll, artillery fire has become irregular as gunpowder evidently burns differently.' As the hours passed, the temperature sagged to *thirty-five degrees* below zero.

On December 5 four Soviet armies opened their counterattack north of Moscow. Next day ten more armies fell upon Bock's exhausted and frozen troops. Thus the real emergency began. The Luftwaffe was grounded. Gasoline fires had to be lit in pits under the tanks to thaw out the engines. The telescopic gunsights were useless, and every calibre of gun and cannon jammed. The Russians used special winter oils and lubrication techniques, and now their formidable T-34 tank appeared en masse, with its armour impregnable to the standard German 37-millimetre antitank shell. 'From

the depths of Russia, undreamed-of-masses of humanity were hurled against us,' recalled an OKW staff officer. 'I can still see the situation maps of the next days and weeks: where until now the blue of our own forces had dominated the picture, with the enemy's red only sparsely sketched in, now from Leningrad right down to the Sea of Azov thick red arrows had sprung up on every sector of the front, pointing at the heart of Germany.'

Meanwhile the paraphernalia of modern war congealed into frozen impotence. If battle casualties were not dragged under cover, they were dead within half an hour from exposure. On the ninth, one corps reported fifteen hundred cases of frostbite; three hundred and fifty men had had to have limbs amputated. Eleven hundred army horses perished every day.

'In wave after wave of densely packed soldiers, the enemy offensive rolled across the snowscape toward us. Our machine guns hammered away at them without letup, you could not hear yourself speak. Like a dark and sombre carpet a layer of dead and dying stretched across the snow in front of us, but still the masses of humanity came on at us, closer and closer, seemingly inexhaustible. Only when they came within hand-grenade range of us did the last of these attacking Russians fall to our machine guns. And then, as our gunners began to breathe again, there was a fresh stir in the distance, a broad dark line on the horizon, and it all began again.' Thus a German officer described the rearguard actions north of Moscow.

Even a healthy commander would have quailed inwardly before such an onslaught. But Field Marshal von Brauchitsch was already a sick man. On December 6 he tendered his resignation. Hitler replied that he could not agree to any change at this moment. Brauchitsch left the room without a word. Who could replace him? Colonel Rudolf Schmundt urged Hitler to become his *own* army Commander in Chief. Hitler said he would think it over. In fact he had already begun to act the role – or rehearse it: by early December 7 it was obvious that the corps holding the embattled salient at Tikhvin was in danger of being encircled. Hitler decided to abandon the city, which was ruined anyway; he did not consult Brauchitsch at all. Halder sorrowfully wrote in his diary: 'The Commander in Chief [Brauchitsch] is barely even used as postman now. The Führer deals over his head with the army group commanders direct. The terrible thing is, however, that the High Command does not grasp the condition our troops are in, and is relying on patchwork operations where only bold decisions can be of use.'

Toward midnight that Sunday evening, December 7, 1941, the buzz of conversation was stilled as Hitler's press chief, Otto Dietrich, burst in.

Hitler rasped irritably at him, but saw that Dietrich was waving a paper: the British press agency Reuters had just announced that the Japanese had launched an air strike at the U.S. fleet in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Hitler joyously proclaimed, 'The turning point!' He bounced out of the bunker and ran through the darkness, hatless and unescorted, to show the news bulletin to Keitel and Jodl. To Walther Hewel he rejoiced: 'Now it is impossible for us to lose the war: we now have an ally who has never been vanquished in three thousand years, and another ally,' referring to the Italians, 'who has constantly been vanquished but has always ended up on the right side.'

EVEN WITHOUT formally declaring war, Hitler issued to the admiralty orders that German submarines and warships might forthwith open fire on American ships as and where they met them. He phoned Goebbels to announce that he was coming to Berlin.

Before he left for the capital, on the evening of the eighth, he discussed at length with his staff how best to declare war on the United States so as to make a good impression on his own people. In Washington the mood was reported to be grave. Late on the eighth, the west coast of the United States was panicked by a false air raid warning, followed the next noon by an alert on the Atlantic seaboard. (Hitler scoffed some weeks later, 'Roosevelt declares war [*sic*]. . . He drives pell-mell out of Washington because of air raid dangers, onto his estate, then back to Washington. . . He makes his whole country hysterical, the way he goes on.')

The Führer arrived in Berlin at eleven A.M. 'He is filled with joy at this fortunate turn of events,' recorded Goebbels after visiting him, meaning Japan's surprise attack on America. 'He was taken completely by surprise and, like myself, at first didn't dare to believe it.' The Japanese had adopted precisely the right tactics: 'The Führer is rightly of the opinion that in modern warfare it is wholly out of date, even mediæval, to issue an ultimatum. Once you make up your mind to defeat an enemy, you should wade right in and not hang around until he's braced himself to take your blows.'

To Hitler this was the delicious moment when he could deliver to that 'lout' Roosevelt the public smack in the eye he deserved. Late on the ninth Germany instructed her Washington embassy to burn its secret files and code books. The foreign ministry furnished Hitler with a list of all Roosevelt's violations of neutrality. Shortly after two P.M. on the eleventh Ribbentrop read out Germany's declaration of war to the American chargé in Berlin: now President Roosevelt had the war he had been asking for, he concluded.

Yet deep within, misgivings were gnawing at the Führer.

Major von Below, who had met him at the railroad station, found him uneasy about the long-term consequences of Pearl Harbor. Ribbentrop also professed (later) to have been distraught at the manner in which the Tripartite Pact, which had been drafted to keep the United States *out* of the war, had now brought her into direct confrontation with the Reich.

Speaking to the gauleiters on December 12, Hitler admitted that he had spent several sleepless nights chewing over the decision whether to declare war on Roosevelt or not. He dismissed the German army's difficulties on the eastern front as 'an unavoidable hitch,' and he hoped that the western 'plutocracies,' reluctant to lose their possessions in the Far East, would now fritter away their forces around the globe.

Despite the strategic benefits Hitler was heard to mutter, 'I never wanted things to turn out like this. Now they' – meaning the British – 'will lose Singapore!' After he had returned to the Wolf's Lair, with the 'Barbarossa' campaign on the brink of its first winter crisis, he made to Walther Hewel this remark: 'How strange that with Japan's aid we are destroying the positions of the White race in the Far East – and that Britain is fighting against Europe with those swine the Bolsheviks!'



Far from Hitler's war, the Japanese suddenly attack on the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor. It comes as a bittersweet surprise to him (NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

Hitler Takes Command

In the dark months of that winter Hitler showed his iron determination. Where his generals saw an ignominious withdrawal as their only salvation, he told them to stand firm until the spring thaw arrived to halt the enemy offensive. When they demurred, argued, and disobeyed, Hitler dismissed and disgraced them, and himself took command of the German army, until a new spirit gradually prevailed along the eastern front. Hitler's powers to influence were remarkable. Soon hardened commanders were swearing they had seen Hitler in the thick of battle – 'We thought it was all over, but then the Führer toured our sector calling for one last ounce of effort from us, and we pulled through!' But many more months would pass before he risked leaving his headquarters.

> I had to act ruthlessly. I had to send even my closest generals packing, two army generals, for example, whose strength was gone and who were at the end of their tether. . .
>
> In winter one of them came and announced, 'Mein Führer, we can't hold on any longer, we've got to retreat.' I asked him, 'Sirrrr, where in God's name are you thinking of retreating to? How far?'
>
> 'Well,' he answered, 'I don't really know!' – 'Do you plan to drop back thirty miles? Do you think it isn't all that cold there, then? And do you imagine your transport and supply problems will be any better there? And if you retreat, do you intend to take your heavy weapons with you, can you take them?'
>
> This man answered, 'No, it can't be done.' – 'So you're planning to leave them to the Russians. And how do you think you're going to fight further back if you haven't got any heavy weapons?' He responded, 'Mein Führer, save at least the army, whatever happens to its guns.'

So I inquired, 'Are you planning just a retreat to the Reich frontier, or what? Where do you plan to call a halt?'

'Well, mein Führer,' he rejoined, 'we probably won't get any choice.'

I could only tell these gentlemen, 'Get yourself back to Germany as rapidly as you can – but leave the army in my charge. And the army is staying at the front.'

The Soviet counteroffensive had torn open a thirty-mile-wide gap between Kluge's and Guderian's armies. More and more Russian troops and tanks poured through the breach. The most effective antitank weapon, the Redhead shell with a hollow-charge warhead – which Hitler had first seen demonstrated on November 25 – had immediately been embargoed by him to keep it secret from the enemy. The fear of Russian captivity, and the lack of weapons, fuel, fodder for the horses, and reserves, produced in his troops a crushing sense of inferiority. 'We have seriously underestimated the enemy, the size of his country and the vagaries of the climate,' Guderian gloomily wrote on December 10: 'And now we're paying for it.'

Hitler sent the army's ailing Commander in Chief von Brauchitsch to the Moscow front to see the situation for himself. Guderian met him on December 14 at Roslavl; he wrote afterward: 'It took a twenty-two hours' drive through the blizzard to reach him.'

Brauchitsch ordered Guderian to hold the line forward of Kursk, but like Bock and Kluge the tank commander knew only one solution: retreat while the going was still good! Hitler turned a deaf ear on them all. 'I can't send everybody home just because Army Group Centre is beginning to leak,' he argued; and he was encouraged by anguished appeals from the other sector commanders not to let a wholesale rout begin.

Army Group Centre's most urgent need was for reserves. Late on December 14 Hitler ordered Jodl to find out how much could be scraped together in the Reich; General Friedrich Fromm explained that his Replacement Army had a number of divisions under training. Half an hour after midnight Hitler ordered Fromm to come to the chancellery. The general undertook to raise four and a half divisions at once, equipped with winter clothing and skis.

At one P.M. the next day Hitler telephoned Field Marshal Leeb, who was now asking permission to pull back his army group (North) to the Volkhov River; Hitler pointed out that this would enable the Russians to pour more troops and supplies into Leningrad.

As his special train left Berlin that evening, Hitler drafted his first Halt Order to the eastern front. 'Any large-scale retreat by major sections of the army in midwinter, given only limited mobility, insufficient winter equipment, and no prepared positions in the rear, must inevitably have the gravest consequences.' The Fourth Army was ordered not to fall back one foot. This controversial order was hotly debated during the night. Lossberg argued that it was time for strategic command of the war to be delegated to an acknowledged expert like General von Manstein; Jodl – emerging from Hitler's conference car – revealed quietly: 'The Führer has already decided on a different way of resolving the command problem.'

It was eleven A.M., December 16, when Hitler arrived back at the Wolf's Lair. His Halt Order was dictated to Bock over the telephone by Halder at 12:10 P.M. To the visiting Dr. Goebbels he confided that day that he had decided to replace all three army group commanders – they all had stomach ailments, he scoffed. Perhaps he was using the term *magenkrank* sarcastically. Hitler no longer trusted Brauchitsch's judgement. He had his chief adjutant, Rudolf Schmundt, flown to the Moscow front; Schmundt returned with an accurate account of Guderian's litany of worries, told him in an hour-long conference on Orel airfield. At last the truth was reaching Hitler. Waiting for the Führer to telephone him about reinforcements that evening, Guderian wrote to his wife: 'Heaven knows how we're going to extricate ourselves. . . I'm just glad that the Führer at least knows what's happening, and I hope he'll come to grips with his customary verve with the bureaucratic wheels of the war department, railroad, and other machinery. . . I lie awake at night racking my brains about how I can help my poor men, who have no protection against this fierce winter weather.'

Toward midnight Bock telephoned Schmundt with the text of his own three-day-old report to Brauchitsch. It read: 'The Führer must decide for himself whether my army group must stand and fight, thereby risking its total destruction, or retreat, entailing precisely the same risk. If he decides on retreat, then he must realise that it is unlikely that enough troops will ever get back to the new line to hold it, and that it will be unprepared for them and not all that much shorter.' Brauchitsch had suppressed this report rather than show it to Hitler.

Over the phone Bock now added that his 267th Infantry Division had that very day been forced to abandon its entire artillery in the retreat. Hitler telephoned him in person. 'In this situation there is only one answer, and that is not to yield one inch – to plug the gaps and hold on!' Bock

grimly replied that his front might cave in any moment. Hitler responded clearly, 'That is a risk I must just take.'

'There is only one thing that ails our front,' he explained to Brauchitsch and Halder a few moments later. 'The enemy just has more soldiers than us.' This was why they must rush the simplest reinforcements – riflemen, each provisioned with eight or ten days' canned food, alcohol, and chocolate – by train to the Russian front. A thousand trucks must be supplied to Bock as well, and two thousand SS troops must be flown east from Kraków. At three A.M. he telephoned Guderian with details of the reinforcements.

Later that day, December 17, General von Richthofen came to the Wolf's Lair with Göring. The Luftwaffe corps commander wrote in his diary:

> Jeschonnek and I went in to see the Führer. He's a bundle of nerves, but clearheaded and confident. . . I kept emphasising that what matters now is keeping our troops alive and fighting where they are. What the front lacks is riflemen, winter gear, and food, but above all the will to stand fast. . . I emphasised the need for him to appeal to each soldier in person, then it will be all right. . .
>
> The Führer listened with enormous interest and concentration. He's planning a major proclamation. Reichsmarschall [Göring] and I were very persuasive. Führer swears loudly about the army commanders responsible for many of the foul-ups. Is grappling with big reshuffle.

Hitler himself signed the order that now went out to the eastern front.

> Major withdrawal movements cannot be made. They will result in the complete loss of heavy weapons and equipment. Under the personal leadership of commanders and officers alike, the troops are to be forced to put up a fanatical resistance in their lines, regardless of any enemy breakthrough in their flanks and rear. Only this kind of fighting will win the time we need to move up the reinforcements I have ordered from the home country and the west.

This was no time to respect personal feelings. Hitler ordered Field Marshal von Kluge to take over Army Group Centre. Hitler attached no blame to Bock and asked Schmundt to make this plain to the field marshal.

Less cordial was his parting with Field Marshal von Brauchitsch, the army's Commander in Chief. The impression he had gained on his visit to

Rundstedt's army group two weeks earlier, that facts were being withheld from him, was confirmed by the inexplicable suppression of Bock's alarming message of the thirteenth. (Later in December, Hitler issued a Basic Order to all Wehrmacht commands, reminding them of the need to respect such reports as an indispensable instrument of leadership – 'It is the duty of every soldier to report unfulfilled orders and his own errors truthfully' – and to report without exaggeration or dangerous embellishment.)

More serious were the recent indications of Brauchitsch's inability or reluctance to execute Hitler's orders. By December 19, his mind was made up: he would follow Schmundt's advice and take command of the army himself. He knew of no general capable of instilling the National Socialist spirit into the army, he explained to Brauchitsch in a loud voice that day, and he added almost inaudibly, 'We shall remain friends.'

Halder would have to carry on as before, while Keitel assumed the ministerial functions of the war ministry. It surprised many that Halder had not shared the fate of Brauchitsch; but Hitler needed the Chief of General Staff for his ability and experience, and the ambitious general learned to swallow his aversion as a professional to the 'upstart' dictator.

Meanwhile, Hitler and Schmundt composed an Order of the Day to the soldiers of the army and the Waffen SS: 'Our country's struggle for freedom is approaching its climax. We are faced by world-shaking decisions. The prime bearer of the struggle is the army. As of today I have therefore taken command of the army myself. As a soldier in many battles of World War I, I share deeply with you the determination to win through. *Adolf Hitler*.'

General Guderian was the next to go. It had slowly dawned on his superiors that he was preparing his Second Panzer Army's retreat; this was clear to Halder from the way the tanks were being regrouped around Orel and the army was being echelonned in depth. Kluge, who had succeeded Bock, was no friend of Guderian, and when the latter arrived at Hitler's headquarters on December 20 Kluge telephoned Halder and Schmundt to warn them that Guderian had lost his nerve. Guderian dramatically set out to the Führer the condition of the Second Panzer Army: his troops were exhausted and outnumbered; it was impossible to dig in, as the ground was frozen solid. Hitler reported, 'Then use your heavy artillery or mortars to blast out craters and install trench heaters in them.' At one stage he caustically inquired of Guderian: 'Do you believe that Frederick the Great's grenadiers enjoyed dying for their country either?' Guderian for his part hinted

that it was high time for Hitler to rid himself of chairbound experts like Keitel, Jodl, and Halder, who had never seen the front line. He flew back to Orel the next day and briefed his commanders on Hitler's renewed Halt Order. But his tanks' stealthy withdrawal still continued. Finally, on December 25, Kluge refused to work with Guderian any longer: one or the other of them must leave. Shortly before midnight Hitler telephoned Kluge back: Guderian was being relieved of his command forthwith.

HAVING ASSUMED command of the German army, Hitler was buried by an avalanche of work. For weeks on end he knew no regular routine. The tea party in his bunker now never started before midnight. Once that winter it started after two A.M., which meant that his weary partners were unable to retire to bed before four or five. Hitler slept in his bunker, with the ventilation system humming all night and the draught blowing on his head.

Christmas at his headquarters was always a cheerless affair, very different from that celebrated at the Berlin ministries, for example. Hitler received his staff in turn, handed them an envelope containing a small sum of Reichsmarks, and sometimes sent them a packet of coffee with a typed note of good wishes. Hewel wrote in his diary on the twenty-fourth: 'A dispirited Christmas. Führer's thoughts are elsewhere. No candles lit.'

Two days before, Hitler had learned from Kluge that the General Staff were sending hundreds of half-frozen troops by air to Smolensk without weapons or winter gear. He had shouted into the telephone: 'Another *Schweinerei*!' Kluge warned him: 'I have a feeling we shall be facing a major decision tomorrow.' Hitler lifted the embargo on the Redhead hollow-charge antitank shells.

A fragment of another famous diary, that of Canaris, graphically portrays the atmosphere:

> *December 24, 1941* General Schmundt is drawing comparisons with 1812 and talks of the 'moment of truth' for National Socialism. The equipment losses are horrifying: trucks, guns, and aircraft have to be destroyed or abandoned because we lack the fuel to bring them back.
>
> All this has a grim effect on our soldiers' fighting morale, as they suddenly realise that they are being badly led. The Führer's actions (retiring von B[rauchitsch] and a number of commanders) are quite right and have befallen those who are by no means blameless, whatever people may say about them. . .

> Our own treatment of Russian prisoners is having awful consequences. In the retreat from Moscow we had to abandon German field hospitals as well. The Russians dragged out the sick and injured, hanged them upside down, poured gasoline over them, and set them on fire. . . On another occasion German prisoners were beheaded and their heads laid out to form the SS symbol.

When the International Red Cross now proposed that both sides return to the accepted conventions, Hitler refused, telling Keitel and Jodl that he did not want his troops to get the idea that the Russians would treat them decently in captivity.

THE YEAR's end had come. The dam on the eastern front might break at any moment. Kluge was again asking for withdrawals, and Hitler was grimly observing that they might just as well fall back on the Dnieper or even the Polish frontier. Hitler related to the field marshal how as a simple infantryman in Flanders he and his comrades had withstood ten days of ceaseless bombardment and nevertheless had held the line. Kluge rejoined that Hitler had not been fighting at minus 25 degrees. 'My corps commander has told me that if the 15th Infantry Division is ordered to stand fast, the troops are so exhausted they will not obey.' Hitler angrily said, 'If that is so, then it is the end of the German army,' and he ended the conversation.

None of Hitler's staff would forget the New Year's Eve that followed. Throughout the day Kluge had been on the phone to General Halder, begging for permission to withdraw; Hitler flatly refused. Any strategic retreat was bound to touch off a general collapse; he demanded a fight to the finish in order to win time until the reinforcements arrived. Supper was again served late. Hitler dozed off afterward, exhausted, while the last minutes of the old year ticked away. His staff gathered expectantly in the mess and waited for him. But at eleven-thirty Kluge phoned urgently from the front, and for the next *three hours* – the time is graven in the diaries of Bormann, Hewel, and the army group itself – Hitler wrangled with the field marshal, arguing and cajoling on the need to stand fast. Hitler refused outright to grant Kluge freedom to withdraw what amounted to a ninety-mile section of the front over twenty miles.

Not until 2:30 A.M. did Hitler arrive for tea with his intimate staff. 'I am glad I know how to overcome even the greatest difficulties,' he said. 'Let's hope 1942 brings me as much good fortune as 1941. The worries can stay.

So far the pattern has always been this: the hardest times come first, as a kind of preparation for the really great events.' In the corner the phonograph was playing Bruckner's Seventh, but nobody was in the mood for it. Hitler's private secretary, Christa Schroeder, wrote two weeks later:

> On New Year's Eve we were all in a cheerful enough mood at supper in the No. 2 Mess. After that we were ordered over to the regular tea session, where we found a very weary Chief, who nodded off after a while.
>
> So we accordingly kept very quiet, which completely stifled what high spirits we had been able to summon up. After that the Chief was away for three hours in conference, while the menfolk who had been mustered to offer New Year greetings hung around with doom-laden faces not daring to allow a smile to pass their lips. I just can't describe it – at any rate it was so ghastly that I broke down in tears in my bunker, and when I went back to the mess I ran into a couple of the lads of the Escort Command, who of course saw at once that I had been crying – which set me off all over again, whereupon they tried to comfort me with words and alcohol, successfully. We all sang a sea shanty at the tops of our voices – 'At Anchor off Madagascar, and We've Got the Plague Aboard!'

Hitler's rigid leadership stabilised the front for long enough. In mid-January 1942 he could authorise Kluge to withdraw the more exposed sections of his army group. By now a new defensive line had been prepared, reserves were arriving, warm clothing had been contributed by the German public, and most of the heavy equipment could be salvaged in time.

The winter crisis had been mastered. But the cost in officers was high – ousted by Hitler *pour encourager les autres.* General Otto Förster, the engineer-general who had already incurred Hitler's displeasure once in a 1938 dispute over fortifications, was dismissed for withdrawing his corps; Field Marshal von Reichenau died of a stroke; Bock, miraculously recovered, was appointed to replace him at Army Group South; General Hans von Sponeck, who had abandoned Kerch, was sentenced to be shot (though Hitler commuted this sentence). General Hoepner, who prematurely withdrew his Panzergruppe to the winter line on January 8, was dismissed from the army in disgrace. Outraged at the loss of his 'well-earned pension rights,' Hoepner instituted a lawsuit against the Reich in the Berlin courts and won. Hitler declared himself above the law and summoned the Reichstag on April 26 to endorse a decree to that effect. The decree gave him powers over

every person in the Reich 'regardless of their so-called well-earned rights.' It puzzled many Germans that an absolute dictator should need to arrogate seemingly superfluous powers to himself, but as Goebbels learned, Hitler's aim was to legalise in advance the radical steps he planned against 'reactionaries, civil servants, lawyers, and certain sections of the officer corps.'

THROUGHOUT December and January 1942, Intelligence reports had trickled into Hitler's headquarters indicating an Anglo-American plan to invade northern Norway in the spring. The sources were ominously similar to those proven accurate in the anxious spring of 1940. He suspected that the enemy had secretly promised Narvik to Sweden. With this in mind Hitler ordered the reinforcement of his fleet in Norway. The battleships *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* had been bottled up at Brest on France's Atlantic coast since the spring, and had been regularly crippled by bomb damage ever since. Hitler was impatient at their enforced idleness.

On December 26 his naval adjutant put to him the admiralty's request for extra air support for their next exercises. This was the last straw. 'I was always a champion of big ships before,' Hitler announced. 'My heart was in them. But they've had their day. The danger of air attack is too great.'

He sent for Raeder to discuss withdrawing the battleships – to Norway, where they would have a new lease on life. On December 29 he told Raeder to bring them back from Brest. Since routing them around the British Isles would invite certain disaster, Hitler suggested taking the warships back through the English Channel. Hitler explained to his naval adjutant on January 4 that surprise was of the essence. 'Any steps which might somehow alert the British are to be avoided,' the adjutant noted. 'If the withdrawal comes off he would like to see every possible ship transferred to Norway. This is the only step likely to have a deterrent effect on the British. Since Churchill has stated that the British still have the bloodiest sacrifices to bear, he considers an invasion of Norway quite likely.'

Vice Admiral Otto Ciliax insisted on reaching the seventeen-mile-wide Dover Straits at high noon; this was inevitable if the warships were to slip out of Brest under cover of dusk. Raeder was unhappy about the whole venture, but the alternative – scrapping the big ships altogether – did not bear thinking about. The attempt would be made in one month's time.

IT WAS probably not until February 1942 that Hitler could form a realistic picture of the Moloch of defeat from which he had snatched his army. The

army had counted 112,627 frost victims by February 20, of which no fewer than 14,357 were amputees. 'Barbarossa' had now cost the German forces close to 1,000,000 casualties, including 200,000 dead. The bitterness within the army's ranks was directed however not at Hitler but at his generals.

One vivid narrative by an ordinary soldier filtered up through SS channels to Bormann. His battalion had marched about aimlessly for some three hundred miles before being hurled into action on the Donets:

> Too late and without any heavy guns, without even a single antitank gun our battalion was thrown into the breach as a so-called stopgap force. The Russians came at us, of course, with heavy tanks and enormous masses of infantry and pushed us back. Our machine guns wouldn't fire because of the bitter cold, and our ammunition ran out. . . Meantime the entire front was beginning to cave in, about sixty miles across.
>
> Everywhere troops were flooding back in disorder, losing their heads. In vain officers confronted them at pistol point trying to restore order in this chaos; panic had broken out everywhere. . . You saw scenes we had never witnessed even with the Russians, and only rarely with the French in France: columns of troops streaming back, often several abreast on one road; steel helmets, guns, gas masks, and equipment littered the whole area. Hundreds of trucks set on fire by our own troops because they could not move them for lack of gasoline or because of the frost and snowdrifts; blazing ammunition dumps, clothing stores, food depots.
>
> The roads of retreat were strewn with dead horses and broken-down vehicles. Upon this scene of chaos there pounced *German* dive-bombers, adding the final touches of perfection to the destruction. . .
>
> Shapeless huddles of misery, swathed in blankets, their legs wrapped in rags and bandages, hobbled along the roads looking like something from scenes of Napoleon's retreat.
>
> For four days our battalion fought on, screening this hideous retreat.
>
> By the fifth day the Russian tanks had overtaken us, shot us to pieces, and wiped out the rest of our battalion.
>
> I myself escaped the tanks – which took a fiendish pleasure in hounding down each of our men until he was flattened beneath its tracks – by running into a deep pit where the snowdrifts barred the tanks' pursuit. . .

'We, the survivors of this catastrophe,' concluded this soldier, 'have only one wish: that the Führer wreak a terrible judgement on the guilty ones.'

Hitler's thoughts were already with the coming spring offensive. He hoped to begin advancing Army Group South into the Caucasus late in April. As he explained to the Japanese, from whom he concealed few of his true ambitions, a southern thrust rather than the capture of Moscow offered many advantages: it would cure the oil problem, it would keep Turkey neutral, and if all went well the autumn might see the Wehrmacht advancing on Baghdad. He disclosed his plan to von Bock on January 18, before he flew out to take command of his Army Group South at Poltava, seven hundred miles away. Hitler already realised that the war would continue into 1943: on February 9, Göring conferred with him on 'responsibility for the prompt provision of locomotives for the winter of 1942–43'; the equipment was to be of a kind capable of surviving the Russian winter.

Germany's allies were initially unenthusiastic about a spring offensive. Field Marshal Keitel in an undoubted feat of diplomacy however persuaded both Romania and Hungary to increase their contingents on the eastern front. Italy also agreed to send more divisions east. Bulgaria, strongly sympathetic to Russia, remained non-aligned. Her king, although an admirer of Hitler's, was pleased that he asked nothing more of Bulgaria's army than that it dissuade Turkey from foolish undertakings. Turkey's feelings were evidently warming toward Hitler anyway, even as the spring thaws melted northward across Russia; the Turkish president privately assured Franz von Papen that he was as convinced as ever of Germany's ultimate victory. Learning from Forschungsamt intercepts that a disgruntled Britain was discontinuing her arms supplies to Turkey, in April Hitler agreed that Germany would supply the Turks with tanks, guns, submarines, and aircraft.

NEUTRAL NATIONS and Germany's allies were not the only ones demanding the products of the German arms industry. Seated in his private plane on December 3, while flying to the eastern front, Hitler had dictated to Munitions Minister Fritz Todt a three-page decree ordering the simplification and expansion of arms production. Basically, future arms manufacture was to be concentrated in the most efficient factories, turning out standardised and unsophisticated weapons by mass-production means.

Todt initiated a radical reform of the arms industry's structure. On January 10, 1942 Hitler ordered the industry to revert to its earlier preferential treatment of the army's needs at the expense of the Luftwaffe and navy (although 'the long-term objectives remain unaltered,' *i.e.*, the focus of the

fighting effort of the latter two services was to be directed against the western Allies). Later in January, Todt outlined his proposed reforms to Hitler – the arms combines would supervise their own projects, and a 'fixed contract price' system would be introduced. On February 7 Todt dined with him; by 9:45 A.M. next morning he was dead, his charred remains lying in the wreckage of his Heinkel which had crashed on takeoff at Rastenburg.

Hitler was desolate at the loss. He ordered the air ministry to design a cockpit recorder, to install in future planes, to register the cause of any accidents. Hitler returned to Berlin to bury Todt. These were momentous hours. As his train pulled into the Reich capital, his battleships were in the English Channel. At noon they would be passing through the Straits of Dover. In the Far East, the final Japanese assault on Singapore, bastion of the British Empire, had just begun. It looked like the end of India, too.

BY THE early hours of February 13, the German fleet's strategic withdrawal from the Atlantic to northern waters had been successfully completed. The *Scharnhorst* had reached Wilhelmshaven, despite damage from two mines. The *Gneisenau* had reached Kiel, also dented by a mine. The *Prinz Eugen* had got through unscathed. In the air battles the British had lost twenty bombers, sixteen fighters, and six torpedo planes; Adolf Galland had lost only seven fighters. The London *Times* commented: 'Nothing more mortifying to the pride of sea power has happened in home waters since the seventeenth century.' Hitler, who had 'trembled for the safety of our ships,' as Goebbels witnessed, now breathed again.

Next day Hitler spoke to ten thousand newly commissioned lieutenants assembled in Berlin's Sportpalast. The photographs show him – looking stern, and flanked by Keitel, Milch, and Himmler – gripping the lectern. As he left the platform a thunderous cheering broke out, and out of the clamour swelled ten thousand young voices united in the national anthem.

The next evening his train bore him back toward his headquarters in East Prussia. Toward midnight, Joachim von Ribbentrop came along the swaying corridor with news that Churchill had just broadcast the announcement of the fall of Singapore. To Fräulein Schroeder the Nazi foreign minister dictated a gloating draft communiqué for the press to publish next morning.

Hitler shook his head, and advised Ribbentrop: 'We have to think in terms of centuries. Who knows, in the future the Yellow Peril may well be the biggest one for us.' He tore the document in half.

Hitler's Word is Law

THE FIRST HALF of 1942 was again to bring the Soviet Union to the brink of defeat. The German soldier's self-confidence had been restored: with the Führer's prodding they had mastered the terrors of the Russian winter, where even a Napoleon had failed. At the end of February the foreign diplomats in Berlin were informed that the Führer had now decided to fight to the bitter end.

Initially, as Hitler's secretary vividly described, the mood at his headquarters upon his return from Berlin was bleak. 'After two days of warmer weather the temperature suddenly dropped again,' she wrote on February 27, 1942. 'The Chief is always dog-tired, but he won't go to bed, and this is often a torment for the rest of us. We used to play records most evenings, and then you could fall back on your own thoughts; but since Todt's unfortunate end the music evenings have been few and far between, and as his tea circle always consists of the same faces, there is no stimulus from outside and nobody has any personal experiences to relate, so the conversation is often tedious and indifferent to say the least. . . There is also a Scotch terrier, but he is not all that popular as he is obstinate and capricious, besides which the Chief says he looks like a scrubbing brush and he'd never let himself be photographed with it.'

Hitler's health had suffered from the winter, but he allowed himself no respite. In December he had jibed to Halder: 'You fine generals only play ball so long as everything's going well. The moment the going gets tough you report sick or tender your resignations!' He ordered a string of arrests. On March 8 his army adjutant Engel notified the Reichsführer SS: 'The Führer has ordained that Reich Railroad *Oberrat* [senior counsellor] Landenberger and counsellor Hahn . . . are to be taken into custody forthwith. Both officials are charged with serious incompetence in the positions they

held during the eastern campaign (as the responsible directors of Army Railroad Directorates Centre and South).'

Morell added an ever-increasing variety of medicines to the Führer's medicine chest. Despite all his endeavours, visitors to Rastenburg that spring found Hitler grey, drawn, and ailing. He confided to Goebbels that he suffered attacks of giddiness. 'The Führer describes to me,' wrote Goebbels of a conversation on March 19, 'how close we were these past few months to a Napoleonic winter. . . Most of the blame for this is Brauchitsch's. The Führer has only words of contempt for him: a vain, cowardly wretch, unable even to grasp what was happening, much less master it. By his constant interference and disobedience he completely wrecked the entire plan of campaign in the east, which had been devised in crystal clarity by the Führer. . . The Führer had no intention whatever of aiming for Moscow; he wanted to cut off the Caucasus [from the rest of Russia], thus hitting the Soviet system at its most vulnerable point. But Brauchitsch and his General Staff knew better: Brauchitsch kept hammering on about Moscow. He wanted prestige victories instead of real ones.'

For the coming German offensive in the east, Hitler had again established a clear list of priorities. This time General Halder accepted them, as Hitler set them out in a conference on March 28, 1942. The main summer offensive, 'Blue,' would open with the capture of Voronezh on the Don; then the armies would roll south-eastward down the Don toward Stalingrad, digging in along the river for winter quarters. By early September he hoped they would have reached the Caucasus Mountains. Depending on the summer victories, he would decide later what operations to undertake in the centre and against Leningrad. After the defeat of Stalin's main armies, Hitler planned to construct an immense East Wall beyond which there might well rage a Hundred Years' War against the scattered remnants of the Bolshevik forces. 'Russia will then be to us what India is to the British,' he told Goebbels.

Already the Soviet Union had lost the iron ore of Krivoi Rog and the manganese of Nikopol; the armourplate of their latest tanks was consequently of poor quality. But if 'Blue' succeeded, Stalin would have no coking coal, or oil either. When the naval staff persisted in arguing for the capture by Rommel of the Suez Canal, Halder impatiently replied: 'The Caucasus operation is still absolutely vital for our oil supply position.' He held that only victory in the Caucasus would ensure the Reich's ultimate survival in the war. Halder's words are quoted by his naval liaison officer in a docu-

ment in German admiralty archives. After the war, he and departmental heads like General Adolf Heusinger claimed to have been unanimous in opposing the Caucasus campaign.

The British aided Russia by intensifying the war in the air in March 1942. On the night of March 3, RAF planes dropped over 450 tons of bombs on a Paris arms factory, killing 800 French civilians. Hitler ordered the Luftwaffe to execute an immediate reprisal on a British target, but a few days later he cancelled the order, explaining to Jeschonnek that he wanted to avoid provoking air raids on German cities; besides, the Luftwaffe was incapable of meting out appropriate annihilation raids on English cities. A week later, a force of 200 RAF bombers laden primarily with incendiaries all but destroyed the mediæval Baltic town of Lübeck, leaving 320 dead in the ruins. This time Hitler did order reprisal attacks on English towns, to be chosen for their defencelessness and cultural value – the same criteria as Churchill had applied. London was explicitly embargoed from attack. It was an unedifying sight – the two opposing leaders, well-bunkered in their respective capitals, trading blows at each other's innocent citizenry. How Stalin, who had long learned to 'think in terms of centuries,' must have relished it!

The British had no alternative as yet. However, Hitler's intuitive sense of strategy warned him late in March that the Cherbourg and Brest peninsulas might be the target of an Allied invasion. On March 27 he ordered all available reserves 'immediately' moved into the region west of Caen and Saint-Nazaire, and he gave instructions that the U-boat base at Saint-Nazaire itself was to be closely reinforced. The very next morning the British launched a commando raid on the base. The ageing destroyer *Campbeltown*, accompanied by torpedo boats and motor launches laden with commandos, entered the base before dawn, rammed the lock gates of the huge dry-dock, and was abandoned. French dockyard workers and sightseers were still clustered curiously around her at 11:45 A.M., when her hidden cargo of time-fused explosives blew up, killing sixty of them.

Over 140 British prisoners had been taken. The interrogation reports submitted to Hitler showed them to be the cream of Churchill's forces; most of them no longer believed Britain could win, but felt that the war would 'just fizzle out.' Goebbels's English-language propaganda was said by these prisoners to have a big listening public. 'We all like the Germans,' said one British major. 'It's just that we are certain that Hitler is planning to conquer the world.' Told that Hitler had no designs on Britain at all, the major is said to have exclaimed, 'Then why not tell our government and

people that! I would be willing to go to the British government and tell them what your peace terms are, and I give my word of honour to return to captivity here. But for God's sake do it now, before the hundreds of thousands who will die on both sides in this summer's fighting are sacrificed!'

Hitler was now fifty-three. On his birthday there were letters from Eva Braun and her mother, and from his sisters Angela and Paula. He wrote back, sending them ham he had just received from a Spanish admirer – with a warning to them to cook it thoroughly before eating. Raeder, Göring, Milch, Ribbentrop, and a host of lesser dignitaries attended the birthday luncheon held in a dining room decked out with tablecloths and flowers. The headquarters officers and staff were given a glass of Piesporter Goldtröpfchen and cups of real coffee. After lunch came the real birthday treat – the first two Tiger tanks were demonstrated to Hitler.

In the east the roads and fields were drying out; the snow had vanished almost everywhere. Never in his life had he yearned so painfully for the onset of spring. He never wanted to see snow again. It had cost him six months of these, his precious last years. The strenuous bunker life in East Prussia had sapped his strength. The first white hairs were appearing on his head. Since Hitler's doctors prescribed the solitude of the Berghof, he asked Ribbentrop to arrange an early meeting with Mussolini.

Hitler's train left the Wolf's Lair late on April 24 on the first leg of the long journey to Bavaria; it was followed by Ribbentrop's equally impressive train. 'A wonder that the foreign minister allows anybody to take precedence over him!' joked Hitler.

In Berlin he was to address the Reichstag, asking for powers that would neutralise the meddling lawyers of the ministry of justice for all time. He showed the necessary decree to Hans Lammers four hours before the speech began on April 26. Lammers suggested that it would suffice for the Reichstag to pass the law by acclamation; Göring would follow Hitler's speech with a formal approval of the law as President of the Reichstag. The Reichstag records show Hitler thundering:

> I do however expect one thing: that the nation give me the right to take immediate action in any way I see fit, wherever I do not find the obedience unconditionally called for by service of the greater cause. This is a matter of life and death to us. *(Loud applause.)* At the front and at home, in transport, civil service, and the judiciary there must be obedience to

> only one idea, namely the fight for victory. *(Stormy applause.)* Let nobody now preach about his well-earned rights.* Let each man clearly understand, from now on there are only duties.

At 4:24 P.M., when the session ended – the last time the Reichstag would ever meet – Adolf Hitler was himself the Law.

In the first meeting with Mussolini at Klessheim, near Salzburg, Hitler painted the German position in Russia in optimistic terms. He promised that in 1943 the Ukrainian harvest would yield at least seven million tons.

Both agreed that a watchful eye was needed on France; but at the other end of the Mediterranean, Turkey was slowly but surely edging around to the Axis camp, if only in consequence of her hatred of the Russians. There was ample proof of this. Turkey had recently imposed a crippling fine on the British envoy in Bulgaria, whose luggage had mysteriously and undiplomatically blown up in an Istanbul hotel.

The second meeting between the dictators was up at the Berghof. The Italians pressed their case for an early capture of Malta; Hitler viewed the operation with distaste – not only because it was to be an Italian operation (and hence in his eyes predestined to ignominious failure), but because he still argued that the war could only be won in the east. The Mediterranean theatre was a side-show of value only for tying down enemy forces.

In deference to the alliance, Hitler paid lip service to the needs of 'Hercules': since April 2, German and Italian bomber forces had been mercilessly softening-up Malta for invasion. In mid-April, he had also agreed to supply German parachute troops for the eventual assault, provided the British did not in the meanwhile spring surprises on him in Norway or France. He wanted Rommel's offensive in North Africa to begin before the British could start theirs; given the limited Axis air strength in the Mediterranean, 'Hercules' would have to be postponed at least until after that.

Early in May, therefore, the OKW laid down that Rommel should launch his offensive at the end of the month, with 'Hercules' postponed until mid-July or mid-August. The actual objectives of Rommel's offensive were themselves a matter of disagreement: the Italians wanted him to halt on a line between Sollum and the Halfaya Pass, but Hitler wanted Egypt. A Finnish report had claimed that 90 percent of the Egyptian population was anti-British, so it must be 'ripe for revolution' in Hitler's view.

* A reference to General Hoepner's lawsuit.

Hitler's intake of information was phenomenal, but this was a necessity if the Führer principle was to be maintained. Ambassador Hewel had logged over eleven hundred different diplomatic papers passing through his hands to Hitler in 1941; by early April 1942 he had already submitted over eight hundred more. Now as Commander in Chief of the army Hitler assumed a workload that would have crushed many men.

We shall probably never know all the Intelligence data on which Hitler based his decisions. A few weeks earlier his Post Office had begun listening in on the enemy's scrambled radio-telephone link between London and Washington, and a regular flow of transcripts had reached Hitler through Himmler ever since March 1942; the transcripts included the top-secret conversations between Roosevelt and Churchill. (Unfortunately these transcripts later vanished, either during or after the war.)

Decoded confidential Turkish and Yugoslav dispatches from the Soviet capital enabled Hitler to follow Stalin's guesswork over Germany's coming offensive – Hitler's intent was to feign preparations for a renewed offensive against Moscow. The decoded American telegrams from Cairo to Washington were even better: in February, the Italians deciphered one in which Washington inquired about the possibility of invading north-west Africa. At the end of April, Cairo was heard advising Washington of the crucial position in Malta: anti-aircraft ammunition was running out, and there was no gasoline for the motor transport. Other American messages betrayed the strength and dispositions of the forces opposing Rommel.

From more orthodox diplomatic sources, Hitler heard the first rumours of an amphibious invasion of France by Admiral Mountbatten's forces. Probably one of the more damaging items was the confirmation blurted out by Churchill – who evidently forgot the wartime slogan 'walls have ears' – that the mounting shipping losses were bringing Britain to 'the brink of her most critical moment since war broke out.'

This quotation reached Hitler through Spain and encouraged him to step up his U-boat and Luftwaffe offensive on the Atlantic and Arctic convoys. In the last week of May, convoy PQ.16 to North Russia was attacked; 7 ships were sunk, with 32,400 tons of war supplies including 147 tanks, 77 aircraft, and 770 motor vehicles. Every Allied vessel sunk reduced the threat of a Second Front.

During May 1942 Hitler's armies regained the military initiative in the east. Only the growing menace of the partisans fighting in the rear of Kluge's Army Group Centre gave cause for concern. In the eyes of many Germans

a great opportunity had been lost – that of winning at least the traditionally anti-Soviet Ukrainians to their cause. This had been Reichenau's last message to Hitler before he died in January 1942. It was the advice of Goebbels, and particularly of Rosenberg as well.

Rosenberg bitterly told Hitler on May 8 that with greater tact the Russian workers could have been procured voluntarily; by rounding them up like slaves, Sauckel – as Hitler's manpower dictator – was merely driving hordes of Russians before him into the forests, thus supplying new recruits for the partisan armies. Gauleiter Erich Koch, the Reich Commissar of the Ukraine, was even worse than Sauckel and quite out of Rosenberg's control. 'I know that we always used to say the Slav liked a good whipping,' said Rosenberg, but he went on to complain that some Germans in the Ukraine were taking this literally and strutting around with whip in hand; this was a bitter blow to the Ukrainians' self-esteem. Hitler welcomed the idea of using Russian prisoners themselves to help fight the partisans, but nobody, certainly not Rosenberg, could persuade him to appoint at least 'puppet' Russian governments in the conquered regions.

The General Staff suggested that Hitler allow the use of poison gas to combat the partisans – thereby countering illegal warfare with illegal weapons. Hitler would not hear of it.

Similarly, he forbade the General Staff to study the problems of biological warfare, except in a purely defensive light. What may have been a hangover from his own gassing experience in the First World War kept him adamant to the end. Although the British (illegally) employed phosphorus in their bombs, Hitler forbade its use in the Luftwaffe's, as its fumes too were poisonous. Since German scientists had developed nerve-gases (Sarin and Tabun) to a degree of sophistication unknown to the enemy, his otherwise inexplicable inhibitions were not without effect on the war effort.

In mid-April Hitler summoned Colonel Lahousen, Canaris's chief of Abwehr subversive and sabotage operations, to discuss German 'partisan' operations. The Russian prisoners who had volunteered for these proved surprisingly effective, filtering in their own uniforms or plain clothes through Russian lines to execute clandestine missions against their former comrades; furnished with the necessary passwords, they were able to return through the German lines unscathed. Army Group South, and particularly the Seventeenth Army, had high praise for them. During April, single pairs of Abwehr agents had already parachuted into Voronezh, Stalingrad, and Krasnodar to sabotage key railway lines, power stations, and pipeline in-

stallations. Special task forces had also been trained – one to defend the Maykop oil fields, another to cut the railway line from Moscow through Rostov to Baku, and a third to organise an uprising in Georgia.

The biggest force was the 'Bergmann' Battalion, 200 German language experts and 550 'reeducated' Russian prisoners from the North Caucasus and Caucasia. When the hour struck, their task would be to infiltrate into the Caucasus Mountains to clear and hold key passes and to arm the anti-Soviet sections of the population. These were operations in which neither Germans nor Russians could expect any mercy if captured.

ARMED WITH overwhelming air superiority, the German spring offensives were opened by General von Manstein's Eleventh Army in the Crimea on May 8, 1942. By May 15, some 170,000 Russians were his prisoners. The remaining Soviet forces in the area were dead or had committed themselves on rafts to the Black Sea.

The second offensive, 'Fridericus,' was scheduled to begin on the eighteenth, with Kleist's *Armeegruppe* and the Sixth Army pinching off the Izyum salient east of Kharkov. But the Russians launched a spoiling attack first, throwing an unprecedented weight of tanks into the salient on the twelfth, in a drive for Kharkov. By evening they were less than fifteen miles from the town. Field Marshal von Bock telephoned Halder that evening that 'Fridericus' would have to be abandoned in favour of a frontal defence of Kharkov; but the Chief of General Staff replied that Hitler thought differently.

Bock warned, 'This is no "blemish" – it's a matter of life and death!' He saw their only salvation in withdrawing three or four of the infantry and armoured divisions to stall the Russian onslaught south of Kharkov. He telephoned this suggestion to General Halder urgently on May 14 – the most crucial day of the battle. Hitler would not hear of it. On the contrary he ordered that 'Fridericus' was to commence as planned in the south.

He telephoned Bock himself, explaining to the harassed field marshal that at a time like this a counterattack was the very best solution possible. To ensure that there was no 'misunderstanding,' Hitler ordered Halder to confirm the instructions to Bock's army group in writing. For two days there was crisis. Hitler insisted that his generals keep their nerve. By the twenty-second, Kleist had linked up with the Sixth Army and encircled the enemy. Within the next week 239,000 prisoners and over 1,240 captured or destroyed tanks were counted on the bloody battlefield, and Hitler had regained the Donets River.

Hitler's ebullient mood during this victorious battle emerges from the diary of Richthofen, who lunched with him on May 21: 'At lunch he held forth to our immense amusement with an endless flood of easy arguments as to the "Special Privileges of Smokers" – for example, the right to drive off mosquitoes from all non-smokers; and on the idiocy of winter sports. . . on hunting and the raising of deer in order to shoot them, on deer themselves as foodstuffs (after they've eaten five times their own weight in foodstuffs first), and on trophy-hunting: "Why don't soldiers mount the jawbones of dead Russians in their rooms, then?" And so on.'

Victor of the battle of Kharkov, Hitler returned briefly to Berlin.

He told Goebbels on the twenty-ninth that the grand objective of 'Blue' would be the Caucasus. 'Then we'll strangle the Soviet system at its Adam's apple, so to speak.'

Halder persistently assured him that Stalin's reserves were drying up. Rumours that Stalin was mobilising a reserve of over one hundred divisions beyond the Urals for the coming winter – not to be tapped even if Moscow itself was endangered – were discounted. More than once in private Hitler commended Stalin's harsh leadership, for this alone had saved the Red Army from extinction. 'If we cannot emulate their toughness and ruthlessness,' he said, 'we might as well give up the fight.' He drew comparisons between a beleaguered garrison which had just withstood a Russian siege of four months, and the American troops who surrendered the fortress of Corregidor in the Philippines, even though they still had food for another two months. Thought-provoking though the captured Russian newsreels of the nightmare battle for Moscow were, with the abandoned German tanks, guns, and trucks heaped black against the snow and the thousands of ill-clad, hungry German prisoners being herded away to an uncertain fate, it was the faces of these unknown, unsung soldiers that gave Hitler hope, for he was convinced that they betrayed no trace of fear or *personal* surrender.

THE CLOAK-AND-DAGGER war of agents and assassins was by no means confined to the east. By May 1942, Allied secret service activity in Norway was increasing. Joseph Terboven, Reich Commissar for Norway, was summoned to confer with Hitler, and Himmler reported the results to Heydrich soon after. On the twenty-seventh, Heydrich was mortally wounded as he drove into Prague in his open Mercedes. The underlying purpose was to 'set Europe ablaze' by provoking Nazi countermeasures against the indigenous Czech population. In revenge for Heydrich's death the Germans

liquidated Lidice, the village found to have harboured the Czech-born assassins.

Undoubtedly – according to SS General Karl Wolff – it was the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich that inspired Himmler to attack the Jewish problem with renewed urgency. Eye-witnesses have described the traumatic effect on the Reichsführer: he appeared for dinner that day with Hitler ashen-faced and barely able to speak. Since a Jewish congress meeting in Moscow had, according to Goebbels's diary, just broadcast directives to world Jewry to launch a war of assassination, the Nazis assumed that Heydrich was the first victim. 'Assassinations can set a bad example if we don't act ruthlessly against them,' wrote Goebbels. He ordered the arrest of five hundred Berlin Jews as hostages; as he put it in a telling turn of phrase, there were still forty thousand Jews at large in Berlin with 'nothing more to lose.'

The fate of many of the deportees was evidently swift and final. The archives of the Berlin revenue authorities reveal that the Gestapo wrote them just ten days after one swoop on May 27, enclosing a list of 'those who have since died' and the assets they had declared before being deported.

Dr. Goebbels again pleaded with Hitler over lunch on May 29 to allow him to expel every last Jew from the city forthwith. Hitler still had a geographical solution in mind however: while agreeing with Goebbels that it would be counter-productive to settle this troublesome people, the Jews, in a harsh and character-building region like Siberia, he indicated a preference for settling them somewhere in Central Africa: 'There they'll be living in a climate which definitely won't make them tough and resilient.' 'At any rate,' recorded Goebbels, with something of a shrug, 'it's the Führer's aim to rid western Europe of the Jews entirely.' It is hard to reconcile such passages, dictated as the summer of 1942 approached, with the now fashionable belief that his chief had ordered an extermination programme.

As Hitler's train bore him back to East Prussia on May 30, after speaking to officer candidates in Berlin, alarming reports reached him of a British air raid on Cologne. The local gauleiter reported that the damage was vast. Göring insisted that only seventy or eighty planes had attacked the city, but Churchill announced that a thousand bombers had taken part. Even Churchill, reasoned Hitler, could hardly get away with a tenfold exaggeration. He was prepared to accept that the RAF had sent over perhaps three hundred, no doubt as a sop to the Kremlin. When General Jeschonnek insisted on the

Luftwaffe's less credible version, Hitler retorted, 'I have never yet capitulated to an unpalatable truth. But I must see straight, if I am to draw the right conclusions.' Göring made no secret of the Luftwaffe's inability to exact retribution. The people of Europe were now breathing a new climate of brutality.

HITLER'S CONTRIBUTION to this new climate was the forcible eviction of the Jews from Europe. He felt that in time all Europe would understand his hatred. 'Somehow,' reasoned Goebbels too, 'we must eliminate them, if they are not to eliminate us.'

The precise mode of 'elimination' met with varying interpretations. Hitler's was unquestionably the authority behind the expulsion operations; but on precisely whose initiative the grim procedures at the terminal stations of this inhuman exodus were adopted is arguable.

Goebbels never lost an opportunity of keeping Hitler in line. Visiting the Wolf's Lair on January 19 he had touched again on the Jewish problem, and noted afterwards: 'On this the Führer holds without qualification to the existing and proper hard-line views.'

This is hardly evidence of any *initiative* coming from Hitler. A few days later the expulsions from Berlin actually halted for several months.

What is known for certain is that at an inter-ministerial conference on the logistics of solving 'the Jewish problem' which was held in Berlin's Wannsee suburb on the following day, January 20, 1942, Himmler's lieutenant, Reinhard Heydrich, briefed government officials thus: the Führer had sanctioned the evacuation of all Jews to the eastern territories, substituting this for the overseas deportation originally planned (Madagascar). In the east the Jews would build roads until they dropped.

This, and no more, is all that the much-mentioned Wannsee conference protocols reveal; there was no talk of murder, and later interrogations of the participants confirmed this (we can disregard Eichmann's version).

Himmler's handwritten notes show that he spoke with Heydrich by telephone the next day about the Wannsee meeting ('Jewish problem. Conference in Berlin.') After telephoning again with Heydrich from the Wolf's Lair four days later, the Reichsführer noted: 'Jews into the KZs' – the concentration camps. On the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth he again phoned Heydrich about arresting Jews. Over these few days Himmler was often a guest at Hitler's table, for instance on January 25 when, according to Heinrich Heim's record, Hitler reflected out loud:

> If I extract the Jew today our citizens get uneasy: 'What's happening to him, then?' But did these same people care one hoot what happened to the *Germans* who had to emigrate? We've got to get it over fast; it's no better to pull a tooth a bit at a time over three months – once it's out, the agony is over. The Jew's got to get out of Europe. Otherwise we'll never reach a European consensus. He's the worst troublemaker, everywhere. And really: am I not in fact terrifically *humane?* During the Papal tyranny in Rome the Jews were maltreated. Up to 1830 they hounded eight Jews through the city on asses every year. All *I* say is, 'He's got to get out.' If he goes for a Burton [*kaputt geht*] in the process, I can't help it. I do see one thing, however: their absolute elimination [*absolute Ausrottung*] if they won't leave willingly.

Given his table company – Himmler himself, Lammers, and Colonel Hans Zeitzler on this occasion – this was surely a significant private discourse by the Führer. On January 27 he repeated the same arguments over dinner to a different audience: 'The Jew has got to get out of Europe! Best thing would be for them to go to Russia. I've no sympathy with the Jews.'

Three days later, speaking in the Berlin Sportpalast, he reminded his audience of his 'prophetic warning' to the world's Jews in 1939. 'The Führer,' dictated Goebbels after lunching with him on February 17, 'once again expresses his ruthless resolve to make a clean sweep of the Jews out of Europe.' The only hint at uglier methods being employed might be read into Goebbels's diary claim that Hitler recognised in this context 'the major prospects opened up by war . . . in all their significance.'

In a paper circulated early in March 1942, evidently the report on the conference at Wannsee, Heydrich's office advised the ministries that Europe's eleven million Jews were to be concentrated 'in the east' for the time being; after the war they might be allocated a remote territory like Madagascar as a national home.

At the same time, on March 6, Heydrich held a second inter-ministerial conference to examine the awkward problem posed by half- and quarter-Jews. If allowed to remain, they might perhaps be sterilised. A 'top level' opinion – i.e., Hitler's – was quoted to the effect that they must draw a clear distinction between Jews and non-Jews, as it would not be acceptable for a mini-race of semi-Jews to be perpetuated in law. But this classification process would call for a colossal administrative effort, so the idea was shelved. Besides, even the lawyers did not like what underlay it.

On March 12 Dr. Franz Schlegelberger, of the Reich justice ministry, wrote in some alarm to Dr. Hans Lammers, head of the Reich chancellery, commenting on what he had learned of the recent conference. 'Decisions seem to be afoot,' he wrote, 'which I have to consider for the most part quite untenable.' Stressing the need to brief the Führer in good time (meaning, if the worst was to be prevented), he proposed they meet urgently.

Lammers replied on the eighteenth that he would be in Berlin at the end of March. A subsequent *aide-mémoire* on Schlegelberger's file, circulated among his top ministerial officials, reads in full:

> Mr Reich Minister Lammers informed me that the Führer has repeatedly declared to him that he wants to hear that the Solution of the Jewish Problem has been postponed until after the war is over. That being so, the current discussions are of purely theoretical value, in Mr Reich Minister Lammers' opinion. He will moreover take pains to ensure that, whatever else happens, no fundamental decisions are taken without his knowledge in consequence of a surprise briefing [of Hitler] by any third party.

Dr. Goebbels, agitating from Berlin, clearly hoped for a more speedy and ruthless solution, although he held his tongue when meeting his Führer. On March 19 he dictated for his diary only this remark by Hitler: 'The Jews must get out of Europe. If need be, we must resort to the most brutal methods.'

That Goebbels privately knew somewhat more is plain from his diary entry on the twenty-seventh: 'Beginning with Lublin,' he recorded, 'the Jews are now being deported eastward from the Generalgouvernement. The procedure is pretty barbaric, and one that beggars description, and there's not much left of the Jews. By and large,' he speculated, 'one can probably say that sixty percent of them will have to be liquidated, while only forty percent can be put to work.' Dr. Goebbels recorded further that the Trieste-born SS Brigadeführer Odilo Globocnik, the former gauleiter of Vienna who was now the SS and police chief of the Lublin District, was performing this task carefully and unobtrusively. As fast as the ghettos of the Generalgouvernement were being emptied, they were being refilled with the Jews deported from the Reich, and the cycle started over again.

'The Jews have nothing to laugh about now,' commented Goebbels; but there is no evidence that he discussed these realities with Hitler. Thus this

two-faced minister dictated, after a further visit to Hitler on April 26, 'I have once again talked over the Jewish question with the Führer. His position on this problem is merciless. He wants to force the Jews right out of Europe. . . At this moment Himmler is handling the major transfer of Jews from the German cities into the eastern ghettos.'

Not just from the cities of Germany, either: the Jews were being rounded up in France, Holland, Belgium, and the Nazi satellite Slovakia. From Hans Frank's Generalgouvernement too – beginning with the ghettos of Lublin – the Jews were being shipped eastward under Globocnik's direction.

Upon arrival at their destinations further east, thousands were evidently simply being murdered. The available documents shed only oblique rays of light on the level of blame for this atrocity. At a Generalgouvernement cabinet meeting in Kraków on April 9, 1942, Hans Frank disclaimed responsibility: 'It is obvious,' he said, 'that the work process will be disrupted if in the midst of this labour programme the order comes to turn over all Jews for liquidation. . . The directive,' he explained, 'comes from higher up.'*

FROM A LETTER signed by SS Oberführer Viktor Brack to Himmler on June 23, it becomes clear that Himmler was anxious to conceal the operation, because Brack quoted Globocnik as being eager to get it all over as quickly as possible in case one day *force majeure* should prevent them from completing it: 'You yourself, Reichsführer, once mentioned that you felt the job should be done as quickly as possible if only for reasons of concealment.'

The gulf between the actual atrocities in the east, and what Hitler knew or said about them, widened. Over lunch on May 15 he again merely spoke to his staff about transporting the Jews eastward; he referred indignantly to the misplaced sympathies of the bourgeoisie. How well the Jews were faring, he remarked, compared with the German emigrants of the nineteenth century – many of whom had even *died* en route to Australia. Goebbels, unhappy that forty thousand Jews still remained in 'his' Berlin, raised the subject at lunch with Hitler on the twenty-ninth. ('I once again inform the Führer on my plan to evacuate every single Jew from Berlin. . .')

* The semantics are significant. Hans Frank said, 'from higher up' *(von höherer Stelle)*. Were the allusion to Hitler, Nazi usage without exception preferred *'von höchster Stelle,'* i.e., 'the top level,' which occurs in a previous paragraph; or even *von allerhöchster Stelle.*

In response, Hitler merely expatiated on the best post-war homeland for the Jews. Siberia was out – that would just produce an even tougher strain of Jewish bacillus; Palestine was out too – the Arabs did not want them; perhaps central Africa? At any rate, he summed up, western Europe must be liberated of its Jews – there could be no homeland for them there. As late as July 24, 1942 Hitler was still referring at table to his plan to transport the Jews to Madagascar – by now already in British and Gaullist hands – or some other Jewish national home after the war was over.

Himmler kept his own counsels. From his papers it emerges that on July 9 his SS police chiefs Krüger (East) and Globocnik (Lublin) orally briefed him on the 'solution of the Jewish Problem.' On the sixteenth he visited Hitler. Photos in the modern Polish archives show Himmler visiting the immense synthetic rubber plant being erected by slave labour at Auschwitz on the seventeenth, and touring the concentration camp itself on the eighteenth, in the company of his chief engineer SS Gruppenführer Hans Kammler and Fritz Bracht, the gauleiter of Upper Silesia.

The first trainload of Jews bound for Auschwitz had left Berlin on the eleventh; in the insanitary conditions prevailing at the camp, an epidemic of typhus was now killing hundreds of prisoners every day, but still the transports rolled in through the gates. On September 4, in reply to a request for a thousand prisoners for construction work on the Danube railway, Auschwitz informed Berlin that they could not provide them until the 'ban' on the camp (*Lagersperre*) had been lifted. It was an odd, one-way kind of quarantine: 'It appears that although typhus is still rife at Auschwitz,' pointed out the British codebreakers who immediately deciphered this SS document, 'new arrivals continue to come in.'

Whatever later tribunals would claim, Hitler himself never visited any concentration camp, let alone Auschwitz. (Nor for that matter did he ever visit a bombed city.) Scholars have also claimed that Himmler witnessed the 'liquidation' of a trainload of Jews on the occasion of his visit. This is devoid of any documentary substance. Under British post-war interrogation Bracht's thirty-four-year-old deputy, Albert Hoffmann, would recall this day and describe how he accompanied Himmler around Auschwitz: conditions were, he volunteered, considerably worse than those he had seen at Dachau camp in 1938. 'Maltreatment did occur,' noted his British post-war interrogator, 'and [he] has actually seen the [crematorium] ovens where bodies were being burned.' But the interrogation report added, 'He totally disbelieves the accounts of atrocities as published in the press.'

On July 19 Himmler wrote this order to Krüger: 'The transfer of the entire Jewish population of the Generalgouvernement is to be carried out and completed by December 31, 1942.' Hitler might be dreaming of Madagascar: his men were disposing differently. The Eastern Railroad at Kraków reported: 'Since July 22 one trainload of 5,000 Jews has been running from Warsaw via Malkinia to Treblinka every day, and in addition a trainload of five thousand Jews leaves Przemysl twice a week for Belzec.' The Transport Ministry passed these data on to Karl Wolff, Himmler's Chief of Staff, with the postscript: 'Globocnik has been told.' Wolff thanked the ministry in fulsome terms for this information, namely 'that for fourteen days now one trainload a day of five thousand members of the Chosen People is going to Treblinka.' On July 28, as we have seen, Himmler issued this gentle rebuke to his chief aide, SS Gruppenführer Gottlob Berger: 'The occupied eastern territories are being rid of the Jews [*judenfrei*]. The Führer has rested the execution of this very grave order upon my shoulders.'

In August 1942 the Germans made the first approach to Hungary about deporting her one million Jews. Döme Sztójay, Hungarian envoy in Berlin, reported this as a 'radical departure' from Hitler's previous ruling that Hungary's Jewish problem could be left until after the war. 'The Germans,' Count Sztójay reported, 'are determined to rid Europe of the Jewish elements without further delay, and intend – regardless of the nationality of these Jews and provided that transport facilities exist – to deport them to the occupied territories in the east, where they will be settled in ghettos or labour camps and put to work. . . According to absolutely reliable information, Reichsführer Himmler has informed a meeting of SS leaders that the German government desires to complete the deportations within a year.'

Himmler continued to deceive his Führer. On September 17 he calmly noted for that day's conference: '1. Jewish emigration [*Auswanderung*] – how is it to be handled in future? 2. Settlement of Lublin,' and, as a result of these points: 'Conditions in Generalgouvernement,' and 'Globus' (Globocnik's nickname). Goebbels spoke six days later in more unmistakable terms to sixty government journalists. Pleading for greater security-consciousness, he pointed out that there were still forty-eight thousand Jews in Berlin – 'they know with deadly certainty,' he said, 'that in the course of this war they will be deported to the east and left to their murderous fate.' These Jews, he added, could already sense the 'inexorable tread of physical annihilation,' and this was why they were inflicting as much damage on Hitler's Reich as they could, 'so long as they live.'

'Blue'

In mid-1942 Hitler launched his rebuilt armies into 'Operation Blue' – the summer campaign that he hoped would leave him master of all Europe as far as Astrakhan, Stalingrad, and Baku. Yet great though the advances the Wehrmacht now made were, strategically the Soviet command remained the victor; after Kharkov, which Hitler considered one of Stalin's most costly errors, the Red Army was never again to allow the Germans to encircle them. Each successive phase of 'Blue' netted a smaller haul of prisoners and booty than the last. When the Red Army did stand and fight, it was on its own terms: with winter drawing on, and at the extreme limit of the German lines of supply.

Emboldened by the victory at Kharkov, Hitler switched his attention to the two Russian armies orphaned by the disaster. He decided on a short postponement of 'Blue,' while two preliminary battles ('Fridericus II' and 'Wilhelm,' respectively) were fought to wipe out these enemy concentrations. He flew to Field Marshal von Bock's headquarters at Poltava on June 1 and won his generals' support, explaining that this was an opportunity they would be foolish to miss. 'What we defeat now can't interfere with our later "Blue" offensive,' he said. 'Wilhelm' began nine days afterward, followed by 'Fridericus II' on the twenty-second. Meanwhile General von Manstein had begun the long-drawn-out final bombardment and assault on the Crimean fortress of Sebastopol. 'Blue' itself – originally scheduled for mid-June – was provisionally set down for the twenty-second.

On June 4, 1942, Hitler made one of his very rare flights outside the Reich frontiers, to honour Finland's Marshal Mannerheim on his seventy-fifth birthday. In the dining car of Mannerheim's special train, its broad windows overlooking the sunlit Lake Saimaa, Hitler was tempted by the polished speech of President Ryti to rise in reply himself. While the local

German envoy looked on disapprovingly and the marshal, perhaps unaware of his visitor's aversion to tobacco, affably puffed clouds of cigar smoke, he delivered *ex tempore* a tactful speech on his awkward position during Finland's winter war with Russia. After the Führer's four-engined Focke-Wulf 200 took off, a flattered Mannerheim commented, 'He is phenomenal!'

Flying back from Finland, Hitler heard that Reinhard Heydrich had died of his wounds. After that, his attention was again attracted to the Jews by reports that German 'political émigrés' were fighting in the ranks of the French Foreign Legion against Rommel in North Africa. On June 9 he had a signal radioed to Rommel's headquarters, ordering that all such émigrés were to be 'mercilessly finished off' in battle: any who were taken prisoner were to be shot 'at once and without further ado on the orders of the nearest German officer.'

THAT WAS the day of the state funeral of Heydrich, held in the chancellery. Czech president Emil Hácha and his government attended. Six hundred of Germany's leading men gathered behind Hitler to pay homage to the Gestapo chief. Hitler used to call him 'the man with iron nerves.' According to his historical officer Wilhelm Scheidt, Hitler had even been grooming him to become his successor. In Prague, Heydrich had modelled himself on Hitler, winning the workers over. By the time of his assassination the first twenty convalescent homes had already been built for Czech workers. On the day he died, fifty thousand such workers demonstrated in Prague in a remarkable manifestation against the British-inspired act. As Siegfried's 'Funeral March' died away, Himmler spoke, recalling the day Heydrich had taken up the reins in Bohemia and Moravia: 'There were many in Germany, and many more among the Czechs, who thought the dreaded Heydrich was going to rule by blood and terror.' But he had not, Himmler explained. He had merely acted radically against the 'unruly dissidents,' restoring respect for German rule and beginning his internal social reforms soon after.

Before President Hácha left Berlin, Hitler advised him to keep the Czechs in rein. If there was any repetition of the anti-German outbreaks that had caused him to appoint Heydrich in September, he said, he would seriously consider deporting all the Czechs from Bohemia and Moravia. Hácha asked permission to warn his people. Hitler recommended that he do so. At 11:10 P.M. he left for Bavaria.

There, on June 15, Admiral Raeder drove up to the Berghof to press the case for the attack on Malta. In May, parachute general Kurt Student had

briefed Hitler on the British fortifications and defences; but to Hitler it seemed that more was known of the probable British tactics than the Italian. Jodl's naval staff officer had told the admiralty: 'The Führer has little confidence in the operation's success, as the Italians' assault strength is wholly inadequate and the Italians don't have the least idea of secrecy. It seems to be a particularly difficult task, far tougher than Crete, which was difficult enough as it was.' Hitler offered a string of specious arguments against invading Malta: even if they succeeded, the Italians could not keep the island garrison supplied (to which the admiralty acidly pointed out that at present the far more difficult supply line to Rommel's army in North Africa was still open). Even more farfetched was Hitler's claim that Malta served their strategy better in British hands, as its supply convoys then offered sitting targets in the anti-shipping war. Hitler had allowed the 'theoretical planning' for Malta to continue during May, but now, on June 15, he offered the admiral little hope that the assault would ever take place.

Over 200 submarines were now in or entering German service – a fruit of the prudent policy of conservation that Hitler had enforced in 1940. Hitler regretted not having devoted more shipyard capacity to submarine construction rather than to big warships. The latter did however have a deterrent value. For this reason he had at first been averse to the admiralty's plan for 'The Knight's Move,' in which the entire German battle fleet in Norway was to attempt to wipe out the next Allied convoy bearing supplies to North Russia, PQ.17. Raeder's liaison officer had assured Hitler early in June that no risk would be involved at all, provided that the Reichsmarschall was ordered to give them Luftwaffe support; when the admiral left the Berghof on June 15, he had Hitler's cautious permission to proceed – provided that any Allied aircraft carriers in the vicinity had first been precisely located and bombed to a standstill.

On the Russian front, the enemy was tensely awaiting Hitler's next move. It seemed clear that the Russians were no longer deceived by Kluge's noisy preparations west of Moscow – indeed, on June 16 an Allied press agency in Moscow quoted German strategic designs for the summer at such length that it was obvious there was a leak in German security somewhere. Hitler was perplexed and furious; Halder's General Staff must be the culprit, he suspected. Hitler was infuriated to learn that the senior General Staff officer of a panzer division had crash-landed in no-man's-land with the complete secret plans for the first stage of 'Blue' – the tank thrust to the Don at Voronezh – just as had happened in the notorious Mechelen affair in 1940.

He himself signed a new order expanding the security rules he had laid down then: 'Security during the preparation of major operations is of particular importance because of the prime risk that operational orders falling into enemy hands might be exploited in time.' As it was, he coolly ordered the strategic plan for 'Blue' to be left unchanged.

TOWARD MIDNIGHT on June 21, his train left Munich for Berlin. His thoughts must have gone back to that night twelve months earlier, when he had spent agonising hours waiting for the onset of 'Barbarossa.' If it had not been for his stubborn army generals last summer, Russia would have long been defeated! During the night, his train pulled into a station for twenty minutes. The telephones were linked up – and there was joyous and totally unexpected news from North Africa: the British stronghold of Tobruk had fallen. Already General Rommel was preparing to sweep eastward into Egypt. Hitler cabled him immediately, promoting him to field marshal.

When Goebbels now referred over lunch to Rommel's irrepressible popularity, Hitler enthusiastically agreed. He told his staff that he would telephone Mussolini advising him to give Rommel a free hand. The message he telegraphed to Rome closed with his familiar argument: 'The battle's Goddess of Fortune draws nigh upon the commanders only once; he who does not grasp her at that moment will seldom come to grips with her again.'

Mussolini allowed himself to be persuaded. 'Hercules' was postponed until early September. Within a week Rommel hoped to be in Cairo.

The Italian command and Field Marshal Kesselring, Hitler's Commander in Chief South, watched the Panzer Army's eastward progress into Egypt with mounting apprehension. Hitler remained optimistic. Although Rommel had received barely three thousand tons of supplies for the entire army during June, Hitler saw Egypt already in his hands. 'Rommel must be given all the supplies he needs,' he announced at supper on June 28, after the news arrived that four enemy divisions were now encircled in the fortress of Marsa Matrûh. He agreed with Keitel's prediction that 'when the Germans captured Alexandria the *entire* British public would be thrown into a far greater rage than at the surrender of Singapore.' 'Let's hope that the American legation in Cairo continues to keep us so excellently informed of British military plans with its badly encyphered cables,' he said.

After 'Blue' was over in the autumn, an Anglo-German settlement seemed certain. The British army however was preparing to hold out some sixty

miles west of Alexandria, at El Alamein, and Field Marshal Rommel now had only seventy tanks and armoured cars at his disposal.

'OPERATION BLUE' had begun early on June 28, 1942. German and Hungarian divisions commanded by General Maximilian von Weichs swept eastward toward the Don city of Voronezh. Two days later General Paulus's Sixth Army began an advance that was eventually to take it southward along the Don. Hitler – encouraged by the evidence presented to him by Halder – believed the Russian reserves were all but exhausted; he began thinking of taking two armoured divisions from 'Blue' for a later assault on Moscow. Hitler anticipated an elastic strategy from Marshal Timoshenko, his Russian adversary in the south, but he hoped to thwart this by moving his tanks down the Don fast enough to prevent the enemy's withdrawal beyond it.

Remembering Dunkirk in 1940 and Leningrad in 1941, Hitler feared that Voronezh in particular would swallow up his precious armour for days on end. Keitel recognised the familiar omens of trouble and begged him to fly out in person and order Bock to leave the city alone. Hitler made the three-hour flight to Poltava, arriving at seven A.M. on July 3; confronted by the granite-faced field marshal however he lost his tongue. Far from flatly forbidding Bock to take the city of Voronezh, Hitler wrapped up his directives in a double negative so vague that as he was leaving Bock queried, 'Am I right in understanding you as follows: I am to capture Voronezh if it can be done easily or without bloodshed. But I am not to get involved in heavy fighting for the city?' Hitler confirmed this with a silent nod.

Back at the Wolf's Lair his courage returned to him. He watched the developing battle impatiently; the city was captured easily enough on July 6, but the two armoured divisions there were immediately subjected to a fierce Russian counterattack. As the unwanted battle for the city developed, precious time was wasted. Not until the eighth could the divisions disengage themselves from Voronezh, and after one day's southward progress their fuel ran out. Boiling with anger, Hitler could see the Russian forces slipping away. Bock was having a run of bad luck; Hitler sacked him. He told Schmundt he still admired the man, but in the present crisis he could work only with generals who followed his directives to the letter.

The consequences were serious. When the first phase of 'Blue' ended on July 8, Weichs had rounded up only 28,000 prisoners and 1,000 tanks; and the Sixth Army had accounted for only 45,000 prisoners and 200 tanks. A week later, the second phase, an attempted encirclement of the enemy north

of the Donets River, ended with the capture of Millerovo; this time there were only 14,000 prisoners.

In retrospect, it should have been clear that the majority of the Red Army had escaped. Hitler, ill-advised by his General Staff, evidently considered these low hauls further proof that the Red Army was on its last legs.

Meanwhile, on June 21, the Third Air Force had brought back photographic reconnaissance of southern England revealing nearly three thousand small craft assembled between Portsmouth and Portland, and numbers of unfamiliar craft drawn ashore at Southampton and Poole. Churchill was brewing something. Halder suggested sending an armoured division to the west; Hitler agreed and ordered that three others already in reserve there should remain, together with the SS division 'Das Reich' and the Seventh Air Division of paratroops. On June 26 he decided that 'if the Russian resistance during the coming operations should be less than expected,' the two SS divisions 'Adolf Hitler Life Guards' and 'Death's Head' would also be transferred to the west. He predicted in a directive of July 9 that the Allies would most probably invade either somewhere between Dieppe and Le Havre or in Normandy, as these coastal areas were within Allied fighter range and suitable for small-craft crossings.

He believed that Churchill's recent visit to Washington had had only one purpose, to advise against launching a full-scale Second Front invasion until 1943. He may have deduced this from intercepted radiotelephone traffic between London and Washington. Hitler certainly mentioned 'Churchill himself as proof.' But he accepted that Churchill was now desperate to help the Russians. In the Arctic German submarines and bombers sank twenty-four of the thirty-six Allied merchant ships bound for North Russia in convoy PQ.17; *Tirpitz* and the battle fleet did not even have to go into action.

AT THE daily war conferences, Hitler's advisers were confident of victory in Russia. In his eyes the east was already a German empire.

On July 9 he discussed with Himmler the final plans for settling the South Tyroleans in the Crimea. On the sixteenth he told Himmler he had no intention of overtly annexing Transcaucasia to the German empire; it would suffice to put a guard on the oil fields and frontiers and leave a Resident-General to protect German interests in the 'Free Caucasian Protectorates,' as they would be known. On the twenty-third he instructed Bormann to issue to Reichsleiter Rosenberg broad guidelines for population control in the east: German standards of sanitation and public health

would not be enforced. When Hitler learned that his troops had fathered over a million offspring with Russian women, he instructed Himmler to identify all the children concerned, select those that were racially promising, and 'recover' them for Germany; if the mothers were also sound and racially acceptable, they could come too. Still uneasy at the prospect that in later generations even the rejected offspring might 'improve' the Russian bloodstock, Hitler ordered the widest distribution of contraceptives to his troops in the east forthwith. As for education, Himmler told his police officials: 'I can only repeat what the Führer has asked. It is enough if, firstly, the children are taught the traffic signs at school so that they won't run under our cars; secondly, they learn to count to twenty-five; and thirdly, they can write their names as well. No more is necessary.'

for the final heave on the eastern front Hitler transferred to a forward headquarters in the Ukraine, code-named 'Werewolf,' at Vinnitsa. At 8:15 a.m. on July 16, 1942 his entire staff flew in sixteen planes to the new site. Three hours later they touched down at Vinnitsa. In these headquarters Hitler's commandant feared only a paratroop attack, perhaps disguised in German uniforms, so the Führer found none of the concrete bunkers characterising the Wolf's Lair at Rastenburg. But the cabins were damp, the climate was humid, and each evening everybody had to swallow Atabrine, a bitter anti-malaria concoction against which the tongue rebelled.

Hitler detested the camp. At night it was icy cold. By day Vinnitsa sweltered in the Ukrainian high summer. He suffered splitting headaches and easily found fault with everybody. OKW diarist Helmut Greiner noted privately: 'The climate and heat here get the Führer down. He longs for his old bunker [at Rastenburg], which is a sure sign of where we'll be quartered this winter. . . By then our operations in the Caucasus will be virtually completed anyway.' With that, Hitler hoped, his oil nightmare would be banished. Once he said, 'If I cannot capture at least Maykop, I cannot fight on.' If he could get the oil fields at both Maykop and Grozny, producing five million tons a year, and even more if his armies captured the Baku oil fields south of the Caucasus, then Stalin would have to concede defeat.

In front of Paulus's Sixth Army the enemy was in full flight toward Stalingrad. The Russian command seemed to be losing control. In a string of directives issued late in July, Hitler confidently asserted that the three-week campaign had thus far attained virtually all the targets he had set for the southern front. The operations against Marshal Timoshenko had gone

'far better and faster' than expected. Hitler claimed: 'Only puny elements of Timoshenko's armies have managed to escape encirclement and get south of the Don.' Already he had divided Army Group South into two new army groups, A and B; to the former he had appointed Field Marshal List, and to the latter, General von Weichs. These two groups would now *diverge* across the Don – List's group to encircle the escaping Russians south of Rostov and then conquer the Caucasus and the Black Sea coast; and Weichs striking south-eastward toward Stalingrad and the Volga, as Hitler was convinced that the river was Stalin's main waterway. After Stalingrad, the armoured divisions would roll down the Volga to Astrakhan on the Caspian Sea.

For the capture of Stalingrad he had assigned only one of the four German armies on hand here, the Sixth. Rostov was captured after fierce fighting on July 23, but the enemy escaped, blowing up the bridges behind him. Two days later the entire west bank of the Don was in German hands.

Again however the German army's supply organisation broke down. For days the Sixth Army's tanks were stranded without gasoline. Worse still, on July 25, Quartermaster General Wagner diverted all logistics effort from Stalingrad to the Caucasus operation. Weichs phoned, pleading for the decision to be reversed; Hitler overruled Wagner, but for ten days the Sixth Army was emasculated by this lack of supplies, while the Russian commanders had time to build a line of defence far to the west of Stalingrad.

At 'Werewolf' violent arguments broke out in the thin-walled wooden conference hut. Halder raged in private at this layman's 'grotesque' ignorance. Hitler snarled that Halder had repeatedly ignored his orders to transfer a panzer corps from the Rostov group to support the Sixth Army. On July 26, List's army group swept across the Don for the attack on the Caucasus; it was supported by Richthofen's Fourth Air Force. Halder wrote the next day, July 30: 'At the Führer's conference General Jodl took the floor and bombastically pronounced that the fate of the Caucasus will be decided at Stalingrad.' This was what Halder had been arguing for a week himself.

It was decided to transfer the Fourth Panzer Army from List to Weichs at once. In vain List protested, when Halder phoned him that evening, that his group too was suffering fuel delays, and he underlined the gamble they were taking by driving southward into the Caucasus with such a weak force, unprotected on its flank. When he asked that at least the 'Gross Deutschland' Division should not be transferred to France, Halder was equally adamant.

Thus two German armies, each with less dependable allied forces in train, were assigned to each of Hitler's southern strategic targets – Stalingrad

and the Caucasus. If the enemy's reserves *were* finished, this was an adequate disposition; if they were not, it was not.

FROM THE documents available it is clear that Hitler did not fear any serious assault on western Europe until 1943, but there were persistent rumours that something was in the air. An Abwehr agent in embassy circles in Madrid reported that Britain was assembling 2,400 craft for an 'invasion attempt' on the Channel or French Atlantic coast toward the end of August.

On July 18 a week of talks between Churchill and Roosevelt's confidant, Harry Hopkins, began in London. Two days later a batch of intercepted transatlantic telephone conversations was sent to Himmler – and no doubt Hitler – with an SS general's comments: 'Although only code words are employed in these intercepted telephone conversations, I deduce the following: today and tomorrow there must be a highly important meeting between the British and Americans. This conference will probably determine where the Second Front is to be established and when. The main people speaking are General Staff officers, ambassadors, and ministers.' On August 13 a highly trusted Abwehr agent in southern England reported that the invasion target would be the Channel port of Dieppe.

Hitler had 29 divisions in the west. But the more he studied the bulky military atlases that his experts had compiled, the more apprehensive he became. He sent out Walter Frentz, his staff movie cameraman, to tour the coastline and photograph what he could find. The colour photographs revealed that the whole coast would be wide open to a determined Allied assault; he resolved to build an impregnable fortress line along the entire Atlantic coastline facing Britain. On August 13 he summoned Albert Speer and the military experts to his Werewolf headquarters and lectured them on his requirements for this 'Atlantic Wall': it must be such that with an armed force of half a million troops the entire coastline could be defended. Cost was no obstacle. 'Our most costly substance is the German man. The blood these fortifications will spare is worth the billions!' The Wall was to be completed by the end of April 1943. The submarine bases and naval gunsites were to get special treatment. Heavy machine guns, tanks, and antitank guns must all come under cover, for Hitler predicted that any invasion would begin with the saturation bombardment of the entire area.

'It is wisest to consider our own Luftwaffe so weak in the west as to be non-existent,' Hitler warned. All bunkers must be gas-proof, he ordered, and have oxygen supplies on hand; the Allies might use napalm bombs, so

the bunkers must have steps and ledges to check the flow of blazing oil. The enemy must think twice about even testing this wall; and when an invasion did begin, it would have to be in such strength that it would be no problem for Hitler to distinguish the real *Schwerpunkt* from any diversionary feints.

He predicted in August 1942 that the invasion would be preceded during the night by waves of airborne troops with orders to disrupt the transport and signals systems and disable headquarters units: the invasion proper would follow at dawn, with three or four thousand landing craft and total enemy air superiority. Of course, as he told a Balkan diplomat on August 14, those mad British might try something even *before* 1943. 'As lunatics like that drunkard Churchill and Maccabeans and numskulls like that brilliantined dandy Eden are at the helm we've to be prepared for just about anything!'

'We've steeled ourselves for surprises,' Rundstedt wrote privately on August 15, 'particularly now that Churchill has visited Moscow. Well, let 'em come!' What occurred four days later was a baffling *coup de théâtre* by the British: two brigades of Canadian troops were landed with thirty tanks and commandos on either side of Dieppe. The raid ended in débâcle. The British lost a destroyer, 33 landing craft, over 100 planes, and 4,000 troops, of whom 1,179 lay dead on the beaches and along the promenade. Rundstedt radioed at 6:15 P.M. that no armed Englishman was left ashore. The message provoked in Hitler the bare flicker of a smile. Rundstedt noted on the twenty-first, 'Schmundt said that He was very grateful and happy about Dieppe. Zeitzler [Rundstedt's Chief of Staff] who was over there yesterday said it looked crazy, heaps of dead Englishmen, sunken shipping, etc.'

Hitler sent his interpreter, Paul Schmidt, to question the prisoners. One prisoner bluntly told him: 'The men who ordered this raid and those who organised it are criminals and deserve to be shot for mass murder!'

Politically, Churchill's Dieppe decision was inept. The Nazis learned that this entire military effort had been mounted merely in order to destroy Dieppe harbour and some guns and radar sites. Hitler was nonplussed that Churchill had even dispensed with paratroops: had these landed in the rear and fought off the reserves, the day might have ended very differently.

In September, secretly addressing his western commanders, he predicted that in the 'real' invasion the enemy would rely far more on air power.

'We must realise that we are not alone in learning a lesson from Dieppe. The British have also learned. We must reckon with a totally different mode of attack – and at quite a different place.' The Atlantic Wall would now have a vital role. 'If nothing happens in the west next year, we have won the war.'

The Black Spot for Halder

Between Hitler's armies and Baku stood the Caucasus – seven hundred miles of untamed, jagged mountains capped by an eighteen-thousand-foot extinct volcano, Elborus. Flanked at one end by the Black Sea and at the other by the Caspian Sea, these mountains had throughout history proved a sure barrier to military ambitions. The Mongol invaders, Timur, the Seljuks and Osmans, had all skirted around its eastern end; Islam had to take to the Caspian in its northward crusade; so did Peter the Great when he invaded northern Persia. The Caucasus itself was impregnable.

Hitler decided to set a historic precedent. Unimpressed by the obstacles, he directed Field Marshal von List's army group to cross the mountains to the Black Sea coast so that the Russian navy there would be finally eliminated. Ill-advised by Halder and army Intelligence throughout the summer on Stalin's remaining reserves, Hitler had however committed his armies to too many campaigns on too many fronts, leaving the uncertain divisions of his Allies to guard the flanks. These Allies – Romanian, Hungarian, and Italian – were low in morale and inadequately equipped, and out of thin air the enemy was producing fresh divisions all along the front. Hitler had no reserves to meet this unexpected situation. Russian generals captured in the fighting just smiled faintly when interrogated about the forces still at Stalin's disposal: 'You are in for the surprise of your lives!'

Hitler was determined not to be surprised. The Russians would unquestionably first strike at the Hungarian and Italian armies on the Don. On August 16 he shrewdly prophesied that Stalin would repeat the 1920 ploy used against the White Russian army – attacking across the Don at Serafimovich and striking toward Rostov; the entire southern front would then be threatened. Repeatedly throughout August Hitler ordered Halder

to shift the 22nd Panzer Division from the Stalingrad fighting to an area behind the Italian army. Halder paid no heed; there is no reference to Hitler's order in Halder's diary or in the records of the army group concerned. History was to show that Hitler's fears were well founded.

Russia's strength was anything but exhausted. On August 2, the army's chief of eastern Intelligence, Colonel Gehlen, had indicated that in July alone Stalin had produced 54 new infantry divisions and 56 new armoured divisions. Halder sent all Gehlen's figures to Hitler the next day, frankly admitting that earlier Intelligence figures had been under-estimates; but he added that the enemy had achieved this feat only by employing far more female labour than had Germany, and he suggested that since Stalin could now fall back only on eighteen-year-olds for recruits they need expect only 30 more divisions to be raised at most. In July the Red Army had lost 3,800 tanks, and since they were importing only 400 and manufacturing less than 1,000 a month, sooner or later their tank supply would be exhausted. But even Halder's forced optimism evaporated two weeks later. Gehlen's new figures now gave Stalin the equivalent of 593 divisions, of which an awe-inspiring number was being held in reserve. Hitler pathetically clung to his earlier information – his entire strategy in Russia had been based on it. He insisted that Gehlen must have been duped by the Russians. According to Halder, Hitler foamed: 'I, the head of the greatest industrial nation – I, assisted by the greatest genius of all time,' referring to Albert Speer, 'I, whose drive makes the whole world tremble, I sweat and toil to produce just six hundred tanks a month. And you are telling me that Stalin makes a thousand!'

Hitler's only hope lay in depriving the Russians of the economic basis for continued defence. That basis lay in the Caucasus.

On August 9, General Ruoff's command had captured Kraznodar, and Kleist's tanks rolled through Maykop; but the oil fields were in ruins. Hitler called on Field Marshal List to strike through the mountains to the ports of Tuapse and Sukhumi as rapidly as possible, thus depriving the Russian fleet of its last sanctuaries and enabling the German army to ferry supplies to the Caucasus by sea. But only one road crossed the mountains, that from Armavir through Maykop to Tuapse. The Fourth Air Force were optimistic still. But on August 11 the OKW Intelligence chief, Canaris, visiting Hitler's headquarters, wrote in his diary: 'Keitel . . . does not share Richthofen's optimism. He does not doubt that the Russians will try to hold the western Caucasus and in particular block the road from Armavir to Tuapse.' Six days

later Kleist's armour reached the eastern end of the mountain ridge, where it was stalled by stiffening enemy resistance and air attacks. The Russians had marshalled over three thousand planes in this theatre, including trainers and Lend-Lease aircraft. Time was running out for Hitler. By the end of August, List's offensive had petered out – defeated by impassable roads, wrecked suspension bridges, dense fog, and driving rain and snow.

To the north-east, Weichs's Stalingrad offensive was faring better, despite the oppressive heat of high summer in the arid steppes. General Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army halted just south of the city. But on August 23, Paulus's Sixth Army reached the Volga at a point just north of the city. With 88-millimetre guns the first Soviet ships were sent to the bottom of the Volga before night fell, but here too the Red Army's resistance was stiffening.

HITLER HAD no reserves left. Since early August fierce Russian attacks had gnawed at the marrow of Army Group Centre. He had ordered Field Marshal von Kluge to erase a Russian salient at Sukhinichi – one hundred and fifty miles south-west of Moscow – left over from the winter crisis; this attack, 'Whirlwind,' would create the platform for a possible later attack on Moscow itself. Russian spoiling attacks on General Walther Model's Ninth Army at Rzhev and Subtsoff left Hitler unconcerned. Perhaps he hoped to repeat his Kharkov victory. When Kluge appealed for permission to cancel 'Whirlwind' and use the five hundred tanks to save the Ninth Army instead, Hitler would not hear of it. Kluge stomped out of Werewolf saying, 'Then you, mein Führer, must take the responsibility!'

The attack began on August 11, in difficult terrain – heavily fortified, marshy forests alternating with treacherous minefields. The attack failed.

Again summoned to Werewolf on August 22, Kluge was rebuked and instructed to recast 'Whirlwind' as a holding operation. Four months later he complained, 'Our worst mistake this year was that attack on Sukhinichi. It was a copybook example of how *not* to stage an attack. They attacked in just about every direction that they could, instead of holding it tightly and narrowly together and thrusting rapidly through with the five armoured divisions.'

Model's Ninth Army at Rzhev began bleeding to death. On August 24, Halder demanded permission for Model to retreat. One regiment had lost eight commanders in a week. Hitler's hatred of the General Staff boiled over. 'You always seem to make the same suggestion – retreat!' he rebuked Halder. 'I must demand the same toughness from my commanders as from

my troops.' For the first time, Halder lost his temper. 'Out there our fine riflemen and lieutenants are dying by the thousand just because their commanders are denied the only possible decision.' Hitler interrupted him with a calculated injury: 'What, Herr Halder, do you think you can teach me about the troops! You were as chairbound in the Great War as in this. You haven't even got a wound stripe on your uniform!'

Field Marshal von Manstein, the conqueror of Sebastopol, witnessed Hitler's outburst against Halder. Manstein had arrived from the Crimea, en route to the north where his Eleventh Army was preparing to launch the final assault on Leningrad in September. Until this city was destroyed, Hitler could not release his divisions from there to strengthen General Dietl's army in Lapland, where the enemy might at any time seize the only nickel mines under German control. (Were he Stalin or Churchill, he said, he would risk anything to knock out those nickel mines: within a few months no more German tanks or shells could be produced.)

For this operation, 'Northern Lights,' he promised Field Marshal Georg von Küchler, the commander of Army Group North, a weight of artillery unparalleled since Verdun. Küchler had told Hitler that he hoped to finish off Leningrad by the end of October, but Jodl interjected that this was too long.

On August 23, Hitler told Küchler he was putting Manstein in charge of the assault on Leningrad. Together they pored over the air photographs of the city. Hitler was apprehensive about house-to-house fighting breaking out in this endless maze of streets and buildings. As Küchler pointed out, when the assault began, hundreds of thousands of workers would down tools, reach for their rifles, and stream into the trench fortifications. Only days of terror-bombardment, directed against the factories, munitions works, Party buildings, and control posts would prevent this. (Manstein later told Küchler he did not believe, from his experiences with Sebastopol, that the Russians could be terrorised by bombardment.)

Hitler feared a more fundamental danger – that Stalin would attack the bottleneck first. He knew that the first nine Tiger tanks were on their way from Germany. 'I would set up the first Tigers behind the front line there,' he told Küchler. Hitler decided that Manstein should launch 'Northern Lights' on September 14, after Richthofen had spent three days softening up the city with his bomber squadrons. Before any of this could happen, on August 27 the Russians struck just where Hitler had feared, at the vulnerable bottleneck. Deep wounds were riven in General Georg Lindemann's

Eighteenth Army here, and the Eleventh Army had to divert its strength to his support. The attack on Leningrad receded ever further into the future.

And all the time the thermometer at Hitler's headquarters camp continued to rise as the Ukrainian sun beat down. The ground was rock-hard, the grass had turned brown and dry, the trees and shrubs were grimy with dust, and clouds of dust hung in choking layers over every road. 'Much though we long for rain and cool weather,' wrote the OKW diarist Greiner from Werewolf on August 31, 'we dread them too because the humidity here is said to be particularly grim. In the forest camp we can just about bear the heat, but we mustn't try to leave the forest shade.' As he ended the letter the first rain began to beat down on the wooden roof, and steam rose from the undergrowth.

With the revival of Malta, after a British convoy had reached the island in June, the supplies getting to Rommel had dwindled to a trickle. Hitler's instinctive dropping of the 'Hercules' plan to invade the island now cost the Germans dear. As the water drought had tormented the Free French defenders at Bir Hacheim in June, now in July and August the lack of gasoline tortured Rommel. In June and July his aircraft had flown twelve thousand sorties. But by early August he was down to his last few hundred tons of gasoline. The Germans had to regroup and every mile of desert cost Rommel more precious gasoline. The enemy's fighter bombers roamed the desert almost unimpeded. Jodl's deputy, Warlimont, flew out to North Africa at the end of July to see for himself; he reported vividly to Hitler on the plight of Rommel, who was confronting an enemy growing stronger each day on the ground and in the air. Hitler impatiently swung around on Göring: 'D'you hear that, Göring! Saturation bombing raids in mid-desert!' When Rommel launched his long-prepared assault at El Alamein on August 30, the enemy knew his precise plans from code-breaking. They outnumbered him so heavily, and his oil reserves were so low, that by September 3 his Panzer Army Africa was back where it had started.

Raeder and the naval staff warned that this was a turning point in the war. The army refused to agree. Jodl persuaded Hitler that the Egyptian offensive had not failed, as the enemy would scarcely succeed in penetrating Rommel's Alamein position. Therefore no steps were taken to restore Germany's lost air supremacy in Africa. Hitler was convinced that no harm could come to the Axis there – and certainly not in 1942.

It was autumn. In the fine oak forests around Hitler's headquarters the scent was unmistakable. The fields had been harvested, the sunflowers had been laid out to dry on the roofs, and bulging watermelons – used here only as cattle fodder – lay everywhere; the poppies were blackening, the ears of corn yellowing, and summer was truly over. Hitler did not know it, but ahead of him lay only a succession of defeats and disappointments.

Tantalising and provocative, Stalingrad seemed to Hitler and his field commanders as good as theirs. Hitler told Halder he wanted the virulently Communist city's entire male population 'disposed of' and the women transported away. Each day, Richthofen's bombers were pouring a thousand tons of bombs into the Russian positions. A two-mile-high pall of choking dust lay over the battlefields. Progress was slow. Richthofen voiced biting criticism of the field commanders Paulus and Hoth, claiming that with more spirit they could have taken Stalingrad in two days.

In the Caucasus, Field Marshal Wilhelm List fared little better. His mountain divisions were at a virtual standstill in the narrow passes – still twenty miles and more from the Black Sea coast. Hitler was impatient at List's slow progress. Jodl courageously defended the army group's achievements and pointed out that it was a consequence of the Führer's own orders for 'Barbarossa' that the mountain divisions had neglected their specialised equipment and were thus now little more than glorified infantry divisions; Hitler claimed he had ordered their proper fitting out as mountain divisions before 'Blue' began in July; but Jodl replied that Hitler's memory was at fault. It was symptomatic of the deteriorating situation that even these two men were falling out with each other.

At the end of August, Hitler summoned List to headquarters. Faced with the conservative, powerfully religious field marshal, Hitler's tongue again clove to the roof of his mouth. He engaged List in affable conversation, lunched privately with him, then sent him back to the Caucasus. Once List had left, Hitler criticised the way he had arrived armed only with a 1:1,000,000 map of southern Russia without any of his forces shown on it.

Hitler's antipathy toward General Halder, the Chief of General Staff, was also still smouldering. To Hitler's staff it was plain that the general had been passed the Black Spot. In his absence, there were debates at the war conferences on who ought to succeed him. Jodl spoke out on Halder's behalf in the days that followed. He drafted a memorandum proving that Halder's staff had only been following Hitler's own orders in the weeks

before the impasse in the Caucasus. But Hitler – tormented by the heat, the rows, and the realisation that victory in Russia was finally slipping from his grasp – was already beyond reason.

The storm broke on September 7. Jodl himself had flown out to Stalino to confer with List. He returned to Vinnitsa that evening and reported to Hitler in private, giving a horrendous picture of the conditions in the Caucasus. The Fourth Mountain Division was being asked to advance on the Georgian coastal towns of Gudauta and Sukhumi along a mountain path over sixty miles long. All its supplies would have to be carried by mule, of which nearly two thousand were still needed. The simultaneous advance on Tuapse, the port farther west, would be incomplete before winter set in. The generals felt there was no alternative to withdrawing from these Caucasus passes and concentrating on the 'road' to Tuapse.

Jodl courageously quoted these views to Hitler. It provoked a furious scene. Hitler ranted that Jodl had been sent down there to get the offensive moving again; instead, he had allowed his Bavarian comrades to hoodwink him. He stalked out, refusing for the first time to shake hands with Keitel and Jodl as he went – a snub he persisted in until the end of January 1943. He announced that he proposed to lunch and dine alone in his own quarters from now on. After supper Hitler sent for Bormann and asked him to provide teams of stenographers to record every word spoken at the war conferences.

Over the next days Hitler contemplated replacing Keitel with Kesselring; he told Jodl he could not work with him any longer either and proposed replacing him with Paulus as soon as the latter had taken Stalingrad.

On September 9, the day the first Reichstag stenographers flew in from Berlin, he repeated his intention of ridding himself of Halder, as the general's nerves were evidently not equal to the strain. That afternoon he sent Keitel to drop the necessary hint to Halder. Keitel was also to tell Halder that Field Marshal List's resignation was required. For the time being he, Hitler, would command Army Group A in the Caucasus – the ultimate in anomalies, for he was after all Commander in Chief of the Army and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht as well.

List resigned that same evening, but Halder seems to have believed the axe would not fall on him as well. After all, Jodl continued in office and so did Keitel. But with Jodl the situation was different: Hitler still warmed toward him; his balding pate was a familiar sight across the map table, and above all he was loyal. Jodl commented to his own deputy, 'The Führer will

have to cast around a long time to find a better army general than me, and a more convinced National Socialist!' So he stayed on, while Hitler treated him with silent contempt for many weeks.

Under Martin Bormann's supervision the first three stenographers were sworn in on September 12 and a second batch two days later. The verbatim record of proceedings came to some five hundred pages a day, every page checked and double-checked by Hitler's adjutants and then locked away.

'When we win a battle, my field marshals take the credit,' Hitler explained. 'When there's a failure, they point at *me.*'

Two years later, in conversation with a medical specialist, Hitler revealed a further motive for introducing the stenographers. The doctor inquired whether the Führer had ever read the British author J. D. Chamier's biography of Kaiser Wilhelm II. The doctor's note of this conversation continues:

> Hitler said that a foreigner probably finds it easier to pass judgement on a statesman, provided that he is familiar with the country, its people, language, and archives.
>
> 'Presumably Chamier didn't know the Kaiser personally, as he was still relatively young,' I said. 'However, his book not only shows a precise knowledge of the archives and papers, but relies on what are after all many personal items like the Kaiser's letters and written memoranda of conversations with friends and enemies.'
>
> Hitler then said that for some time now he has gone over to having all important discussions and military conferences recorded for posterity by shorthand writers. And perhaps one day after he is dead and buried an objective Englishman will come and give him the same kind of impartial treatment. The present generation neither can nor will.

BY MID-SEPTEMBER 1942 the General Staff had reverted to its familiar, comforting theme that the Russians were finished. Hitler optimistically spoke to Weichs and Paulus of future campaigns and of the capture of Astrakhan on the Caspian Sea. On September 13 the systematic assault on Stalingrad began. The next day even Richthofen believed the Russians were flagging. In his private diary Baron von Weizsäcker reported a talk with his friend General Halder thus: 'He says that above all he's leaving his post without worries for the army. The Russians are too far weakened to be the danger to us they were last winter. The weak spot is Africa.' (Halder loathed Rommel, largely because Rommel had never gone through the General Staff.)

Now however the Russians began a heroic struggle for Stalingrad, contesting every yard of the battered city. Halder had still not executed Hitler's order for the 22nd Panzer Division to be placed in reserve behind the vulnerable Italian Eighth Army on the Don. On September 16, Hitler again ordered the transfer. Was it inertia or pigheadedness on Halder's part?

Hitler, seething over the gradual stagnation of the summer offensive, suspected the former. On September 17, he finally resolved to appoint the bustling General Zeitzler in Halder's place; he turned down Keitel's suggestion that either Manstein or Paulus would be better, and he sent Schmundt, his chief adjutant, to Paris the next day accompanied by General Günther Blumentritt, who was to replace Zeitzler as Rundstedt's Chief of Staff. It was late on September 23 before Schmundt arrived back at Hitler's Ukrainian headquarters, bringing a puzzled – and still unenlightened – Zeitzler with him. An hour after midnight Hitler had the 47-year-old general fetched from the guest house, and launched into an impassioned monologue on List and Halder – the latter was 'more of a professor than a soldier.' When the red-faced Zeitzler tried uncomfortably to defend his chief Hitler cut him short, rose to his feet, and announced that Zeitzler was to replace Halder forthwith. 'I hereby promote you to full general.'

Halder attended his last war conference the next midday. Afterward Hitler took leave of him, while Keitel and the stenographers stood by; he rebuked the general for lacking the kind of fanatical idealism that Moltke had displayed in serving the monarchy. As Halder left, a victory mood reigned among the OKW officials, who rejoiced at the disgrace Hitler had inflicted on the General Staff. Schmundt proclaimed that the last barrier had fallen; the 'spirit of Zossen' would now be stamped out, and the German army steeped through and through in the true spirit of National Socialism.

The new Chief of Staff was certainly more closely aligned with the Party than Halder, but he was by no means complaisant. Field Marshal Keitel felt it advisable to warn him: 'Never contradict the Führer. Never remind him that once he may have thought differently about something. Never tell him that subsequent events have proved you right and him wrong. Never report on casualties to him – you have to spare the nerves of this man.'

Hitler hoped that Zeitzler would succeed in remoulding the General Staff, and he drafted two orders for Zeitzler to deal with: one dispensing with the older army commanders – some of them were over sixty – and the other scrapping the traditional red-striped trousers and insignia of the General Staff. Zeitzler refused to inaugurate his office with such radical decrees.

In a third decree, Hitler subjected the personnel decisions of the General Staff to the Army Personnel Branch; he made his own chief adjutant, General Schmundt, head of that branch – thus for the first time acquiring absolute control over all senior army appointments. The brazen 'freemasonry' of General Staff officers must lose its monopoly within the army. Hitler ordered:

> (a) There is only one officer corps. The best officers are to be given additional training to equip them for early entry to high front-line commands;
> (b) There is to be no limit on the number selected for training. . .

In this way a tidal wave of youthful, active front-line commanders, equipped with the skills of the General Staff, promoted in leaps and bounds while still at the peak of their mental and physical abilities, would flood new life into the weary outer reaches of the German army. Halder's replacement by a general eleven years his junior was therefore just the forerunner of a much more fundamental revolution.

AS HITLER flew back to Berlin on September 27, 1942, the first autumn thunderstorms were drenching the capital. A mood of melancholy gripped the people – tired of waiting for the word that Stalingrad had fallen.

Domestic morale was sagging. The British night bombing raids on city centres were proving more than the fighter and anti-aircraft defences could handle. He ordered the Luftwaffe to build flak towers in Munich, Vienna, Linz, and Nuremberg – the fear that these beautiful cities might be laid waste was a 'constant nightmare,' he told his staff. During September heavy raids had been made on Bremen, Duisburg, Düsseldorf, and Munich. The Luftwaffe, itself in a period of technical innovation, had neither long-range strategic bombers nor high-speed fighter-bombers comparable with those of the enemy; the four-engined Heinkel 177 was plagued by engine failures and the much-vaunted Messerschmitt 210 fighter-bomber had had to be scrapped outright earlier in 1942.

Hitler understood nothing about aircraft and had confidently left the Luftwaffe's future in Göring's hands. He began to suspect that his confidence had been misplaced.

In Holland, as Hitler knew, the British secret service was parachuting tons of sabotage material to its agents. Himmler's Gestapo had penetrated

the spy net and was ambushing each successive shipment of agents and equipment – a self-perpetuating 'England Game' on which the Führer was kept constantly informed.

Even Denmark, the crucial link with Scandinavia, was growing restive. On King Christian's birthday, September 25, Hitler had sent the customary greetings; he received a reply that could only be regarded as a deliberate snub. Hitler recalled his envoy and military commander from Copenhagen, sent the Danish diplomats in Berlin packing, and delegated the former Gestapo official Dr. Werner Best to act as his strongman in Copenhagen.

WHAT HITLER now began to fear most, however, was an enemy invasion of France. The Dieppe raid might have lasted only nine hours, but it had shown that this was not impossible. 'As you all know,' he reminded Göring, Speer, Rundstedt, and a handful of selected generals in the chancellery's Cabinet Room on September 29, 'I have never capitulated. But let us be quite plain about one point: a major enemy landing in the west could precipitate a real crisis.' The enemy would have absolute air supremacy. Only the strongest bunkers and antitank defences could ward off an invasion.

The army's transcript of his three-hour speech quoted his further remarks:

> At present he saw his main job as being to spare his country from being turned into a battlefield, which would be the immediate result of an invasion in the west. If we can stave that off until the spring, nothing can happen to us any longer.
>
> We have got over the worst foodstuffs shortage. By increased production of anti-aircraft guns and ammunition the home base will be protected against air raids.
>
> In the spring we shall march with our finest divisions down into Mesopotamia, and then one day we shall force our enemies to make peace where and how we want it. Once before the German Reich suffered from its own excessive modesty. The new German Reich will not make the same mistake in its war aims.

The next day he spoke to the German people – for the first time for many months, he apologised, as he had less time for speechmaking than a prime minister who could cruise around the world in a silk blouse and floppy sombrero.

It is of course impossible to talk with these people about Beliefs. If somebody believes that Namsos was a victory, or Aandalsnes – if somebody describes even Dunkirk as the biggest victory in history or sees in some nine-hour expedition a flabbergasting sign of national triumph – obviously we cannot even begin to compare our own modest successes with them! . . .

If we advance to the Don, finally reach the Volga, overrun Stalingrad and capture it – and of that they can be certain – in their eyes this is nothing! If we advance to the Caucasus, that is as unimportant as that we occupy the Ukraine, have the Donets coal in our domain, have 65 or 70 percent of Russia's iron ore, open up the biggest grain region in the world for the German people and thus for Europe, and also take over the Caucasian oil wells.

All that is nothing! But if Canadian troops, wagged by a tiny English tail, come over to Dieppe and just manage to hang on there for nine hours before they are wiped out, then that is an 'encouraging, astounding proof of the inexhaustible, triumphant energy typical of the British Empire!' . . .

If Mr. Churchill now says, 'We want to leave the Germans to fret and ponder on where and when we will open the Second Front,' then I can only say, 'Mr. Churchill, you never gave me cause to worry yet! But that we must *ponder* – you've got a point there, because if my enemy was a man of stature I could deduce fairly accurately where he would strike; but if one is confronted by military nincompoops, obviously one hasn't the faintest idea, for it might be the most lunatic undertaking imaginable. And that is the only unattractive feature – that with paralytics and drunkards you can never tell what they'll be up to next.'

Africa and Stalingrad

Hitler believed he had good reason to face the coming winter with optimism. The harvest had been better than expected. Speer was harnessing Germany's latent industrial might to the mass production of tanks and guns. Under Field Marshal Milch the Luftwaffe's production lines were being reorganised. The Atlantic coast was being fortified. The navy was in Norway; the submarines were blocking the Allied convoy routes in the Arctic.

On October 1, 1942, Field Marshal Rommel visited him at the Berlin chancellery. He explained why he had had to abandon his offensive against the British El Alamein position in August, attributing it to their air supremacy. Hitler showed him the prototypes of new self-propelled assault guns that Speer had collected at the chancellery that morning – formidable low-chassis armoured vehicles mounting the well-proven 105-millimetre guns. He told Rommel of the new Tiger tanks (he promised to send forty of them across to Africa) and spoke of a weapon of such appalling power it would blast a man off his horse two miles away. Speer had briefed him on Germany's atomic research effort some months before.

Before leaving for a rest cure in Austria, Rommel wrote to General Georg Stumme, deputising for him at El Alamein. 'The Führer has assured me,' he wrote, 'that he will have all possible reinforcements sent down to the army. Above all the newest and heaviest tanks, mortars, and antitank guns including the 75mm, 88mm (newest type), and 76·2. For our later attack operation I think it will be important to be equipped with large numbers of 15cm, 28cm, and 30cm rockets and the necessary launchers, as well as a huge number of smokescreen generators (five hundred).'

Hitler returned to his headquarters in the Ukraine on October 4. Halder was finally gone. Zeitzler took control of the eastern front, while Jodl and

the OKW controlled the other theatres – a division of responsibility reflected in the war conferences at headquarters. Zeitzler toured the southern front at once, returned to Vinnitsa, and issued over Hitler's name a string of realistic orders designed to increase the army's fighting strength.

On one occasion Zeitzler warned that unless a certain salient was withdrawn, the troops would lose confidence in their leadership. Hitler thundered at him, 'You're just a staff officer. What do you know about the troops!' Zeitzler sharply reminded the Führer that in August 1914 he had gone to war as an infantry ensign – his knapsack on his back and his rifle on his shoulder – to fight in Belgium. 'For bravery in the face of the enemy I was promoted to lieutenant. I was wounded twice. I think my combat experience is as good as yours.' Hitler instructed the general to proceed, and avoided attacking him personally after that.

Thus Zeitzler's position became entrenched. Keitel, by way of contrast, had long forfeited Hitler's esteem. Hitler took to making 'good-humoured' fun of his absent commanders. 'The horizon of my field marshals,' he would mock, 'is the size of a lavatory lid!' Field Marshal Keitel did not move a muscle as the others laughed. The next day however an adjutant informed Hitler that Zeitzler wanted a brief private word with him. He cordially shook the general's hand. 'Mein Führer,' said Zeitzler. 'As an army general I take exception to the language you used about our field marshals. May I ask you not to use expressions like that in my presence again?' Hitler gave him his hand. 'I thank you.' When Antonescu visited him three months later, Hitler introduced Zeitzler to him with the words, 'This is my new Chief of General Staff. A man of iron nerves and great war experience.'

THE WAR had taken on many new dimensions since 1939. In the west the Allies had initiated commando warfare. These peripheral successes struck a raw nerve in Hitler, whether the target was a radar site in France or a German oil dump. He showed little inclination to mercy when the commandos were caught: in August, six Britons were captured in North Africa behind the lines; two of them were wearing German uniforms. Hitler ordered their execution. One saboteur could paralyse a power plant and deprive the Luftwaffe of thousands of tons of aluminium. A commando-training manual fell into German hands, with diagrams on how to slit human throats and how to truss prisoners so that a noose around their neck would strangle them if they moved. In September Hitler was told that the British had machine-gunned the survivors of a sinking German minelayer.

On his return to Vinnitsa on October 4 news reached him of a British commando raid on the tiny Channel island of Sark the night before. The island was guarded only by a rifle company. The commandos had seized five army engineers sleeping in a hotel, manacled them, and then shot and stabbed them to death. Hitler immediately ordered all the prisoners taken at Dieppe manacled as a reprisal. The British proclaimed they would retaliate against the same number of Axis prisoners in their own camps.

Hitler drafted a text for the daily OKW communiqué broadcast on the seventh: 'The terror and sabotage squads of the British and their accomplices act more like bandits than soldiers. In the future they will be treated as such by the German troops and ruthlessly put down in battle, wheresoever they may appear.' General Jodl urged Hitler to leave it at that – the warning words would alone deter, no need actually to put them into practice.

Hitler disagreed. He justified it by referring to the commandos' methods as being outlawed by the Geneva Conventions. 'Captured papers show that they are ordered not only to manacle their prisoners, but to kill their defenceless prisoners out of hand the moment they feel such prisoners might become a burden or hindrance to them in the prosecution of their purposes.' Jodl, unhappily distributing Hitler's order to the commanders on October 19, urgently warned them not to let it fall into enemy hands.

A thirst for revenge also played its part. For example, the record of Hitler's war conference on October 23 began: 'In reprisal for the fresh British air raid on a casualty clearing station in Africa the Führer has ordered the immediate execution of the Briton captured during the sabotage attack on the power station at Glomfjord.'

A week later an attempt by six British sailors to destroy the battleship *Tirpitz* – wintering in a Norwegian fjord – came to grief when their two-man torpedoes were lost in foul weather. Himmler reported to Hitler that all were in plain clothes; Norwegian frontier guards had captured them, but the six had opened fire with concealed weapons, and five had escaped into Sweden; Hitler ordered the sixth, a twenty-year-old seaman, to be executed.

Three weeks later the same fate met fourteen British commandos sent in a glider to attack a hydroelectric power station in Norway. (The target, the Vemork power plant at Rjukan, had been selected because of its importance for the German atomic research programme.) The Norwegian police rounded up the survivors. In accordance with the new Führer Order, all were shot before darkness fell.

In the Balkans a partisan war of unexampled ferocity was raging, thanks to the devious policies of the Italians and the ineptness of the puppet governments that Hitler had established. The Italians had occupied Montenegro and annexed large stretches of the Croatian coastline. In Serbia the partisans were ruthlessly suppressed by the Germans; but in Croatia rival armies of guerrillas and bandits roamed the land, robbing, plundering, and murdering. The Četniks, led by Draza Mihailović, were fighting for the restoration of the monarchy in Yugoslavia; the partisans, led by Tito, were fighting an ineffective campaign against them all, hampered by a lack of adequate weapons. Mussolini's Second Army, commanded by the controversial General Mario Roatta, sided not with the Ustasha but with the Četniks – even to the extent of arming them against Tito's partisans. The Italians were weaving a tangled web indeed. For Hitler, Croatia was of great strategic importance: across the country passed the German supply lines to North Africa; and it exported two hundred thousand tons of bauxite to Germany annually. Order was imperative to the Nazis. But the Italians were suppressing the Croat population and actively shielding the Jews – the very subversive elements against whom the Croatian head of state ('Poglavnik') Ante Pavelic was struggling to apply repressive laws similar to those enforced in Germany. Hitler thrashed out this explosive situation with the Poglavnik in September. He had two divisions in Croatia, and a Croat battalion was already fighting before Stalingrad; more were being trained – an entire foreign legion – by the Waffen SS, but now the Poglavnik would need them to restore order in Croatia. All this was the result of Roatta's strange dealings, but Hitler was loath to embarrass Mussolini, and the papers sent down to Rome were stripped of any references that might offend Italian susceptibilities.

In private Hitler regretted the Italians' kid-glove treatment of the Serbs. Only brute force bereft of inhibitions would work. 'On principle, when combating illegals, anything that works is right – and I want that hammered into everybody,' he laid down. 'This gives everybody the freedom of action they need. . . If the illegals use women and children as shields, then our officer or NCO must be able to open fire on them without hesitation. What matters is that he gets through and wipes out the illegals.'

In August, September, October, and November Himmler's security forces counted 1,337 dead Russian partisans and executed a further 8,564 taken prisoner. His report to Hitler for the same period listed 16,553 'partisan accomplices and suspects' captured, of which 14,257 were executed; an

2.) Bandenhelfer und Bandenverdächtige:

a) festgenommen					
	1343	3078	8337	3795	16553
b) exekutiert					
	1198	3020	6333	3706	14257
c) Juden exekutiert					
	31246	165282	95735	70948	363211

additional 363,211 Russian Jews were claimed to have been executed under the same heading.

As for the German Jews, Goebbels did not mince his language in a talk to senior Berlin journalists on September 23, stating that the Jews knew 'with deadly certainty' that they were to be deported to the east and 'left to their murderous fate.' 'They can already sense the inexorable tread of physical annihilation,' he added, 'and therefore, so long as they live, they inflict damage on the Reich wherever they can.'

The deportations from Berlin had resumed; from July 1942 onward trainloads had begun leaving the capital for the camp at Auschwitz and what was vaguely called 'the east.' Finding the number of Jews remaining, particularly in the legal system, still intolerable, Goebbels suggested declaring them all 'unconditionally *ausrottbar*' – disposable, but the word has a nastier undertone. Otto Thierack, the new minister of justice, refused to go along with this. 'So long as the Führer won't allow us to address the broader issue of those with Jewish blood or in-laws,' he replied to Goebbels, 'we can't carry out an *Aktion* confined to the legal system.'

The entire Nazi killing operation was smothered in paper-thin euphemisms and bland letters-for-the-record. Referring to allegations made public by American Jewish leaders in New York, on November 30 Himmler wrote to Gestapo chief Heinrich Müller remarking, for the record, that given the high mortality rate in their concentration camps such rumours were not surprising.

Hitler felt that he could look east without qualms. Soon his armies could have their well-earned winter respite. On October 14 he issued orders for winter positions to be built along the current front line – making rigorous use of prisoners, civilians, and women to aid in their construction. The next day Field Marshal von Richthofen wrote in his diary: 'The Führer was

in good humour because of Stalingrad and of having got rid of Halder. Particularly affectionate to me. . . The Führer curses with vehemence (and justification) the name of List. My operational plans [in the Caucasus] are approved. I tell him something of our infantry weakness, our tactics, and above all our difficult terrain. Zeitzler is stout and cheerful. . .'

In the last week of October however the spirit of Paulus's troops in Stalingrad flagged. Richthofen wrote: 'The main reasons lie in the weariness of the combat troops and commanders, and in the army's pedantic tolerance of a ration strength of twelve thousand men per division, of whom only a thousand are actually in the front line. . . I tell Paulus of this, but he naturally doesn't agree.'

The capture of the Caucasian oil fields was impossible before winter. Maykop had been in German hands since August, but the oil wells had been either blown up or cemented over. The army's petroleum brigade reported that a year's reconstruction effort would be needed.

German manpower was an equally scarce war commodity. Industry relied on the 6,000,000 foreign workers procured by Hitler's labour dictator, Fritz Sauckel. Speer promised to raise three divisions from German munitions workers, but the divisions never materialised. The army itself claimed to be 1,000,000 men under strength. Hitler ordered both the navy and the Luftwaffe to transfer manpower to the anaemic army. Göring decided to create twenty Luftwaffe 'field divisions' rather than see 220,000 airmen forced into the army's reactionary field-grey ranks.

Coupled with these manpower and materials shortages was the complete bankruptcy of Hitler's Intelligence services by the autumn of 1942. Colonel Reinhard Gehlen's army Intelligence consistently predicted that the next Russian offensive would open not in the south (at Stalingrad) but against Smolensk or even Velikiye Luki, on the northern front.

Admiral Wilhelm Canaris produced equally convincing evidence that the Allies were planning a Second Front not, for example, in North Africa, but against the Cherbourg peninsula.

Moreover, Hitler was still misled as to Stalin's coming strength. (On October 21, Keitel said, 'The Führer is convinced the Russians are collapsing. He says that twenty million will have to starve.') Yet he did not accept Gehlen's judgement willingly.

By October 26 he was clearly rattled by concrete evidence of Russian plans to cross the Don just where the Axis front was weakest – held only by the reluctant Italians and Romanians. The army group interpreted the dense

night traffic toward Serafimovich as unimportant local replenishments, but when the enemy started constructing heavy bridges across the Don, Hitler knew differently; he had built bridges across rivers himself and knew what it presaged. On November 6, Gehlen reiterated that there were no signs of any Soviet offensive in the south in the near future; far more likely was a drive against Smolensk, followed by a thrust to the Baltic to cut off the whole of Army Group North; in the south the logistical and transport difficulties would surely dissuade them. Nor, stated Gehlen, would the Russian offensive begin before the ground froze over.

Hitler equally saw no cause to suspect that the North African theatre would soon be in an uproar. Rommel was in Germany on sick leave. He had told Hitler that his El Alamein position was virtually impregnable, but late on October 23 General Montgomery launched an unheralded attack on it with 150,000 men supported by over 1,000 tanks and 800 planes. Rommel's stand-in General Stumme was killed, evidently by a heart attack; hurrying back to Africa the field marshal found his army's fuel and ammunition almost at an end. Despite the Luftwaffe's around-the-clock bombing of Malta, the Axis supply convoys to North Africa had been cut to pieces. Thanks to British code-breaking every single tanker had been detected in time, tracked down, and mercilessly sunk. The Luftwaffe commander in the Mediterranean wrote in his diary: 'A crisis of undreamed-of proportions has emerged for the panzer army. The failure of the Italian fighter escort is to blame – it just did not show up. . . Kesselring came, worried out of his mind. Lunch was like in a mortuary. . . Everybody's hopes were pinned on the second tanker, which sailed on October 28. In the night it was reported sunk.'

For a time both Rommel and Kesselring were confident that the Alamein crisis had been overcome. Hitler willingly believed them. On November 2, however, the line was breached. In his interim report, received by the OKW that evening, Rommel suddenly sounded despondent and anxious:

> The army will no longer be capable of impeding the strong enemy tank formations expected to repeat their breakthrough attempt tonight or tomorrow. For want of motor transport it will not be possible for the six Italian and two German non-motorised divisions to withdraw in good order. . .
>
> Even our mobile troops are embroiled in such heavy fighting that only part will be able to disengage themselves from the enemy. . . Our mea-

> gre fuel supplies will not permit any withdrawals over long distances. In this situation the gradual destruction of the army must therefore be assumed as inevitable, despite the heroic resistance and exemplary spirit of the troops. *Sgd.* Rommel, *Field Marshal*

In fact Rommel had already ordered his army to abandon El Alamein – without notifying anybody to that effect. To cover himself Rommel later dispatched to his superiors a lengthy but seemingly routine daily report, near the end of which he surreptitiously buried the announcement that he would withdraw from El Alamein the next day, November 3: 'The infantry divisions will already be withdrawn during the coming night, November 2–3.'

This routine report arrived by teletype at the Führer's headquarters at three A.M. Jodl's night duty officer, an elderly major of the reserve, overlooked the vital sentence announcing the retreat and left the report unforwarded until morning. Jodl's deputy, General Walter Warlimont, discovered it too late. It was belatedly rushed over to Hitler at nine A.M.

For a time he suspected that the OKW had deliberately sat on Rommel's report in order to confront him with a *fait accompli* in Africa. 'At this critical moment Rommel turned to me and the Fatherland!' he exclaimed. 'We should have been stiffening his resolve. If I'd been awakened I would have taken full responsibility and ordered him to stand fast. But our Mr. Warlimont is snug asleep while Rommel is appealing to me!'

The night duty officer was fetched. Hitler questioned him in person. Rommel also was interrogated by radio, asked to state the precise time that the infantry retreat had begun. He radioed back: 'In the latter part of the night' – so it seemed that, but for the report's inexcusable delay, Hitler could still have stepped in to forbid the retreat. Punishment was swift: the major was reduced to the ranks and sent to the front; his superior, Warlimont, was evicted from the OKW and the Führer's headquarters that same day. But Rommel's reply was a lie: his retreat had begun at ten P.M., before his report had been dispatched.

Hitler believed he could still give Rommel the inspiration he seemed to be begging for, and he radioed to Rommel the following message, finely attuned to the susceptibilities of the field marshal:

> With me the entire German people is watching your heroic defensive battle in Egypt, with rightful confidence in your leadership qualities and

> the courage of your German and Italian troops. In your situation there can be no thought but of persevering, of yielding not one yard, and of hurling every gun and every fighting man available into the battle. Considerable air force reinforcements are being transferred over the coming days to Commander in Chief South [Kesselring]. The Duce and the *Comando Supremo* will also do their utmost to furnish you with the means to keep up the fight.
>
> Despite his superiority the enemy must also be at the end of his strength. It would not be the first time in history that the stronger will has triumphed over the stronger battalions of an enemy. To your troops therefore you can offer no other path than that leading to Victory or Death. S*gd.* Adolf Hitler

Rommel rescinded his order to retreat, but already it was too late.

As November 3 ended, he had only twenty-four tanks left. The next day he reported that the battlefront no longer existed, and formally asked permission to revert to 'mobile warfare,' until the new line at Fûka was reached.

Hitler sourly replied that evening, 'In view of the way things have gone, I approve your decision.' He felt Rommel's nerve had failed him.

Two years later he brooded: 'He should have stood his ground up front [at El Alamein], that was his only chance of saving anything. He didn't compensate for the enemy's superiority of numbers by heading for the wide-open spaces – that was where their superiority really began to take effect. At that bottleneck, just forty miles across, you could just about survive an attack. But the moment you were forced out and lost the cover of the [Qattara] Depression to your left, all the lessons of desert warfare showed you were liable to be leapfrogged again and again by the enemy. . .'

Too late, Hitler ordered reinforcements rushed to North Africa – the deadly Tiger tanks, guns, ammunition, fuel, two fighter squadrons from Russia, and a bomber squadron from Norway. In Africa a rout had begun, one that was to end dismally in Tunis six months later.

While at the southern end of the eastern front the First Panzer Army's advance on Ordzhonikidze was going well, in Stalingrad the infantry was losing heart as the weeks now became months. Field Marshal von Richthofen was to note in his diary in mid-November: 'Telephoned Zeitzler about the need for really energetic leadership in the battle for Stalingrad, or for the attack to be called off otherwise. If the mopping-up is not done now, with

the Volga icing over and the Russians in Stalingrad in dire distress, we will never pull it off. Besides, the days are getting shorter and the weather worse. Zeitzler promised to tell the Führer; he shares my view. During the night a Führer Order came to the Sixth Army in line with my telephone suggestion. But I still don't think it will work. I stressed to Zeitzler that the commanders and combat troops in Stalingrad are so apathetic that only the injection of a new spirit will get us anywhere.'

Hitler was still hypnotised by the obvious Russian preparations north of Stalingrad. The OKW historian recorded on November 2: 'The Russian attack feared across the Don toward Rostov is again discussed. More and more Russian bridges are being built there. The Luftwaffe is to submit reconnaissance mosaics. The Führer orders very heavy air attacks on the bridge sites and troop assembly areas suspected in the forests on the other river bank.' Soon after, two thousand enemy vehicles were glimpsed massing north of Kletskaya, and the headquarters of a new Russian army group, the 'Southwest Front,' was detected at nearby Serafimovich.

THROUGHOUT OCTOBER 1942 the Abwehr and SS Intelligence agencies had been swamped with 'enemy invasion plans.' Some spoke of Norway, others of the Channel coast or the Mediterranean. A further military setback here might force Italy out of the war: the whiff of treason was already in the air. Hitler's military liaison reported on November 6 that Mussolini thought the time now ripe to make amends to Stalin. Hitler believed he could postpone his next meeting with the tired and ailing Fascist dictator no longer.

Besides, he had gradually become aware that an immense fleet of Allied ships was assembling at Gibraltar; Hitler had recently suspected that the enemy would invade Sardinia or Corsica prior to striking at the Italian mainland itself. Much of the Luftwaffe's strength had been withdrawn eastward from Sicily, but Hitler had ordered all available German submarines to the western Mediterranean. The navy insisted that the enemy was just preparing to fight a big supply convoy through to Malta.

On the sixth they changed their tune. The armada had sailed, and Italian Intelligence now reported that the vessels had trucks and invasion tackle on their decks and they were joining convoys of ships streaming eastward through the Strait of Gibraltar. The navy judged that the enemy planned to invade Libya, in Rommel's rear. Though both Mussolini and the Luftwaffe believed an enemy invasion of Algeria far more likely – beyond the range of Axis air power – Hitler had by November 7 bowed to the navy's judgement

that the likely targets were Tripoli or Benghazi, and he personally radioed to the handful of submarines and torpedo boats in the Mediterranean: 'Army's survival in Africa depends on destruction of British naval forces. I expect determined, victorious attack.'

Early on the afternoon of November 7 Hitler's train left Rastenburg for Berlin and Munich, where he was to meet the Italians. At a seven p.m. war conference, Jodl briefed him on the latest position of the enemy armada in the Mediterranean: it was still heading due east and would probably pass through the Strait of Sicily. Toward the end of the conference, the naval staff telephoned with confirmation: from the armada's six p.m. position and the ships' speeds, the Italians deduced that it *must* be an invasion of Algeria. Hitler accepted this calculation. It was a bitter pill to swallow, and his disappointment at his Intelligence agencies must have been profound. But he remained outwardly calm and detached.

His train was halted by a signal at a little railroad station deep in the Thuringian forest. British radio stations, a message here said, were announcing that an American invasion force was disembarking in French North-West Africa at Algiers, Oran, and Casablanca.*

At Bamberg railroad station Ribbentrop stepped aboard Hitler's train. He had hastily flown down from Berlin after arranging for Count Ciano to come at once to Munich – Mussolini being indisposed. Hitler wanted to discuss this new opportunity of reversing Germany's policies toward France, but Ribbentrop brimmed with gloomier topics. The entire Axis position in the Mediterranean was endangered – unless Hitler could let up on commitments elsewhere. 'Give me permission to put out peace feelers to Stalin, via his ambassador in Stockholm, Madame Kollontay,' appealed Ribbentrop, 'even if we have to sacrifice virtually everything we have conquered in the east!' Hitler rose angrily to his feet, reddened, and refused to discuss anything but North Africa. A momentary military weakness was no time in which to put out peace feelers to an enemy poised to strike.

* The various enemy invasion convoys had suddenly headed sharply south, soon after the Italian sighting at six p.m. As Hitler sourly pointed out in April 1944: 'The few invasions they have carried out so far completely escaped our notice. . . Take the North African invasion!' And Keitel agreed: 'we were saying right up to the last moment that they'd sail on through. Their vanguard was off Sicily, and we said they were going right on through. Then all at once they made a right-about turn and did a beeline for the shore.'

At 3:40 p.m. on the eighth, the train pulled into Munich. As always the actual occurrence of the feared event had lifted the torturing burden of uncertainty. At last he knew where the Second Front was – and it was not the European mainland. Now he must airlift troops to Tunisia to bar the American advance. Now France must join the Axis cause.

At six o'clock, in a buoyant mood, he delivered his anniversary speech to the Party's Old Guard at the Löwenbräukeller in Munich. He reminded them yet again of his 1939 Reichstag prophecy concerning the fate of the Jews. 'Of those who laughed then, countless already laugh no longer today,' he mocked. Believing a message from the Chief of Staff of Army Group B, Hitler boasted that Stalingrad was virtually theirs: 'I wanted to reach the Volga – at a particular spot, at a particular city. By coincidence it is blessed with Stalin's name . . . it is a vitally important city, because there you can cut off thirty million tons of river transport, including nine million tons of oil, it is there that the grain of the mighty Ukrainian and Kuban regions flows in for transportation to the north, there the manganese ore is processed – it was a huge shipment complex. That was what I wanted to capture, and, do you know, modest as we are – we've got it too! There are only a few more tiny pockets! Now some may say, "Then why don't you fight faster?" – Because I don't want a second Verdun, that's why.'

Hitler's new-found fondness toward the French, inspired by glowing accounts of the fierce fight put up by French warships defending Casablanca and Oran against the American invaders, lasted less than one day.

He began to suspect that the French commanders were trying to make a deal with the enemy. On November 8 he had still believed General Henri-Honoré Giraud to be in France; the next day he found out that Giraud had slipped across to Gibraltar aboard an enemy submarine to act for Eisenhower in Algiers. Hitler's fury at Giraud's escape was matched by his contempt for Himmler's secret agents who had failed to prevent it.

By the time Count Ciano was ushered into his study at the Führer Building in Munich late on the ninth, Hitler's old hostility toward France had rekindled in full. He snapped at the Italian foreign minister that he had decided to occupy the rest of France. Whatever France's Premier Laval – due at ten p.m. – might say, Hitler's mind was already made up. His troops were already massing along the demarcation line in France. 'Strike, strike, strike!' – it was the old Prussian remedy when all else failed.

LAVAL WAS delayed by fog; his car arrived in the small hours of the night. Hitler postponed seeing him throughout the tenth. He was seen deep in conference with Ribbentrop, Himmler, and the generals discussing the Intelligence reports: Himmler's agents at Vichy had intercepted Darlan's message to Pétain during the night demanding the execution of renegade officers. But the SS agents also learned that Darlan's staff was preparing to leave Vichy, and that all his war ministry files were being burned. At midday, Darlan's name appeared on an order for all resistance to the Allies to cease. The luckless Laval was received now with barely concealed brusqueness. Hitler told him of his demands for immediate access to Tunis. At twenty past eight that evening Hitler issued the order for his troops to occupy the rest of France the next morning. It stated that 'the occupation is being carried out in accord with the wishes of the French government.'

'Just like "Otto" in 1938?,' the Luftwaffe generals in Paris asked General Jeschonnek in Munich.

'Jawohl,' he replied, 'just like Austria.'

This time there were no cheering crowds. The real French hatred was reserved for the Italians occupying Corsica and the Riviera and arriving in Tunisia in the wake of the Germans.

The Italians in southern France overstepped the lines agreed on with the French, and Hitler learned that Laval had been overheard on the twelfth shouting into a telephone that if Italy did not withdraw her troops in twenty-four hours he would declare war on her!

The Italian shenanigans drove Hitler's last few supporters in France into open hostility. A member of Jodl's staff reported however late on November 14: 'The Führer's actions are governed by his consideration for Italy. He believes it absolutely vital to bolster the Duce in every way we can, and this is why he categorically refuses to oppose Italy's claim to leadership in the Mediterranean, including the coast of southern France, or to present the Italians with *faits accomplis*.'

'Operation Brown,' the hasty creation of an Axis bridgehead in Tunisia, went well, but on November 12 the rest of the French forces in North Africa capitulated to the enemy.

For two weeks, Hitler simulated trust in the French navy. He had no option, as he had no *military* means of detaining the French fleet of three battleships and over thirty destroyers at Toulon; he therefore accepted the promises of the navy's admirals not to open hostile action against the Axis. Silently however Hitler prepared for the worst.

A Luftwaffe general noted on November 16: 'The Führer fears the French will create an enclave paving the way for an Anglo-American invasion; that must be prevented.' The Germans also learned to their chagrin that the apparently senile Pétain could have been communicating secretly with Darlan all the time by underwater cable; so much for his protestations of loyalty broadcast by radio. Hitler ordered the Luftwaffe to stand by in case the French fleet suddenly set sail, and on November 18 he decided to make a clean sweep.

A date was set eight days hence to overrun the Toulon enclave. Mussolini was not informed; but in spite of Raeder's frantic objections, Hitler stipulated that the Italians should nonetheless be given the Toulon dockyard and the French fleet – or whatever remained of it. The operation began before dawn on the twenty-seventh. By noon the French fleet at Toulon no longer existed, its battleships blazing, stranded hulks, all but a handful of the rest scuttled or blown up. Hitler gave the Italians the wreckage to pick over. Throughout occupied France new painted slogans appeared overnight on a thousand walls: *Vive l'Amérique!* and patriotically, *1918!*

Germany's defeat was regarded as a certainty now.

HITLER RESIGNED himself to a long stay at the Berghof. He badly needed respite. In Germany too the public stoically steeled itself for eventual defeat. The diplomats again hinted that this was their last chance to extend feelers toward Stalin – while the Red Army was still being held at bay.

But it was not.

On November 19, 1942, the phone rang at the Berghof and General Kurt Zeitzler, chief of the General Staff, fighting an almost forgotten war from his headquarters in East Prussia, came on the line. A heavy artillery bombardment had begun on the Don front north of Stalingrad; masses of tanks, black with Russian troops, were swarming forward. The Romanians were in full flight. It was all happening just where Hitler had predicted.

The next day another offensive started, this time south of the city.

Two days later Stalingrad was encircled, and the fiercest drama of the war began.

Part VI: Total War

RIENZI: *Allmächt'ger Vater, blick herab!*
Hör mich im Staube zu dir flehn!
Die Macht, die mir dein Wunder gab,
laß jetzt noch nicht zugrunde gehn!

. . .

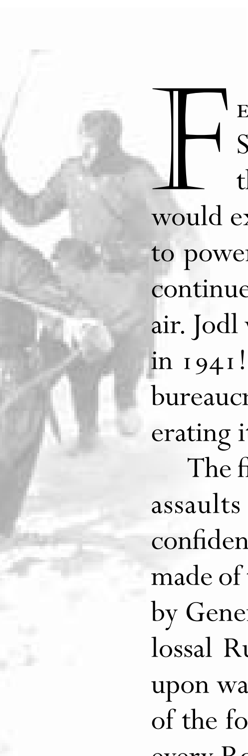
O Gott, vernichte nicht das Werk,
das dir zum Preis errichtet steht!

RICHARD WAGNER'S OPERA *Rienzi*



Winter campaign (GERMAN FEDERAL ARCHIVES)

Trauma and Tragedy



Few events in World War II were to rouse greater controversy than Stalingrad. It would mark the end of German military initiative in the east, costing perhaps two hundred thousand German lives; it would explode the dream of empire which had fired Hitler when he came to power ten years before. Far from being on its last legs, the Red Army continued to produce unsuspected masses of tanks and infantry out of thin air. Jodl was seen, white-faced, exclaiming, 'The Russians are stronger than in 1941!' Hitherto, the Russian command had been wooden, hesitant, and bureaucratic. Now suddenly it was flexible, deliberate, and farsighted, operating its tank forces as the Germans had in 1939 and 1940.

The first word of trouble that reached Hitler was merely of two infantry assaults on the Romanian Third Army's sector; the Romanians were confident, even when a gradual artillery barrage did begin. No use was made of the panzer corps stationed in reserve behind them and commanded by General Ferdinand Heim. At five A.M. on November 19, however, a colossal Russian artillery barrage suddenly began, and at seven A.M. wave upon wave of tanks assailed the Romanians. They fought heroically – three of the four Romanian generals were killed in enemy bayonet charges, and every Romanian company commander fell in the ensuing battle.

A rout began. At 10:10 A.M. General von Weichs's Army Group B ordered Heim (Forty-eighth Panzer Corps) to counterattack, but by midnight it was clear that he could not. He had begun the day with the 22nd Panzer Division, the 1st Romanian Panzer Division, and a battle-group of the 14th Panzer Division under his command; but the 22nd was still exhausted from the battle for Stalingrad itself; the battle-group of the 14th was removed from his control during the day; and the Romanian 1st Panzer Division had evidently abandoned the field of battle – Heim had no idea where it was.

Weichs had hoped that the Romanians would hold the front long enough for Heim's corps to arrive, but they did not, and their flight barred the advance of Heim's tanks. He was further beset by freezing fog and rain, by sleet and snow. Weichs ordered him to go over to the defensive that evening.

Hitler now clearly realised it as a major crisis, although the General Staff situation reports painted it in a misleading hue. By 9:30 P.M. he had authorised Weichs to abandon all further assault operations in the city of Stalingrad so as to release forces to the main front line. He also ordered Field Marshal von Manstein to abandon the planned attack at Velikiye Luki and to establish a new army group on the Don, thus relieving Weichs of direct responsibility for the two Romanian armies, and for the Fourth Panzer Army and the Sixth Army at Stalingrad. During the night he ordered Heim to attack again, but the attack failed. The Romanian Army evaporated. From Bucharest came the most indignant sounds. Hitler ordered Keitel: 'Send for General Heim at once. Strip him of his insignia and arrest him. He is to blame!' To appease Antonescu, Heim was sentenced to death some months later, but the Führer subsequently relented and commuted the sentence.

SUCH WERE the shocking events north-west of Stalingrad. To the south of the city, a Russian bridgehead of equal menace spewed forth hundreds of tanks on November 20. The enemy's preparations here had escaped detection until two days before. The eastern flank of the Fourth Panzer Army withstood the blow, but three adjacent Romanian divisions crumpled with scarcely a sigh. By the twenty-first it was clear that the two great pincer arms of the Red Army offensive would join around Stalingrad the next day.

It was natural that the endangered Sixth Army should see its survival as depending on an airlift. When Hans Jeschonnek, chief of the air staff, arrived at Berchtesgaden on November 20 from Luftwaffe headquarters in East Prussia, he did not reject the idea. One hundred thousand men had been sustained in the Demyansk pocket for many months the previous winter by such an airlift. On the afternoon of the twenty-first, Hitler therefore decided the Sixth Army must stand fast 'despite the danger of its temporary encirclement'; the railroad line was to be held open as long as possible. 'As to airlift, orders will follow.'

Immediate objections were raised. Richthofen phoned Göring, Zeitzler, and Weichs to warn that there were not enough transport aircraft. The Sixth Army would need many hundreds of tons of food, oil, and ammunition each day. Hitler, however, neither saw nor sought any alternative: in his

speeches of September 30 and November 8 he had committed himself before the entire nation – he could not relax his grip on Stalingrad and the Volga now. Late on the twenty-first he again ordered Paulus to hold on.

When Hitler telephoned Göring in Berlin, the latter assured him his Luftwaffe would do all in its power. (As he explained to Richthofen: 'The Führer was optimistic. What right had I to be the pessimist?') When he called briefly at the Berghof late on the twenty-second – making for Paris on a shopping trip – he repeated this undertaking. It is improbable that he did so unconditionally; but then Hitler himself expected the encirclement to last only temporarily – until the damaged army group front had been repaired and the infiltrating enemy annihilated.

Shortly Paulus radioed that his ammunition and food stocks would soon be exhausted. Hitler realised that he could postpone his return to his East Prussian headquarters no longer. At five to ten that evening, November 22, his train left Berchtesgaden station. For a whole day he was confined to the train as it headed for the Wolf's Lair. Every few hours the train was halted for contact to be established with General Staff headquarters. As the train jolted on through the darkness, he and Jodl began elaborating a daring plan for the Fourth Panzer Army to attack the encircling ring and relieve Stalingrad. It would take about ten days to prepare. Zeitzler phoned him during their next halt, imploring him to instruct the Sixth Army to break out westward before it was too late. Hitler rebuffed him. 'We have thought of a new way out. Jodl will tell you. We will discuss it in person tomorrow.'

Hitler arrived back at the Wolf's Lair late on November 23.

He found Zeitzler waiting outside his bunker, and put out his hand to him. 'You have done all you could,' he said as they stepped inside. With calculated pathos, he added, 'One finds one's true greatness in the hour of deepest misfortune – like Frederick the Great.'

Zeitzler was unimpressed. He reported that the army group commander, Weichs, now shared his view that the Sixth Army was doomed if it stayed put. Hitler thumped his desk. 'We are not budging from the Volga!'

A CURIOUS optimism prevailed around him – an optimism that has been effectively masked by the post-war alteration of the few headquarters records that survive. Helmuth Greiner, author of the OKW's war diary, would falsify many passages in its published text. The printed version includes the following sentences in an account of a crucial argument between Hitler, Jeschonnek, and Zeitzler on December 21, at the height of the Stalingrad

crisis: 'As usual, however, again no bold decisions are taken. It is as though the Führer is no longer capable of doing so.' There is no trace of these words in Greiner's original 1942 text. In fact, initially the situation was not seen as hopeless: reserves were moving up, ready for the relief offensive that Manstein was to direct. Nor was the Sixth Army's supply position as bad as had been feared. On November 24 its quartermaster asked for 200 tons of fuel and 200 tons of ammunition a day, with an unspecified quantity of flour after the twenty-seventh; on the twenty-fifth the OKW historian wrote that Paulus's 'demand for 700 tons' was evidently exaggerated. Gradually, the figure of 300 tons a day was accepted as reasonable. The air staff was evidently optimistic, for twice the OKW historian noted that 298 Junkers transport aircraft were available, with a daily lift capacity of 600 tons. (In 1945 Greiner would 'improve' his 1942 record to read: 'Only 298 transport planes are with the Fourth Air Force; about 500 are needed.')

One problem was that attempts to reach Göring failed. The Reichsmarschall was still shopping in Paris. (In his fake 'diary' entry of November 25, 1942*, Major Engel nonetheless transplanted Göring to the Wolf's Lair for a dramatic conference with Hitler that day.) On November 27 the OKW's note on Hitler's afternoon conference read: 'Enemy's dispositions around Stalingrad could hardly be more favourable for Sixth Army's intentions. The Stalingrad food situation is better than we thought.' On the twenty-ninth, the same record referred to Field Marshal von Manstein's appreciation of the situation: 'Arrives at same conclusion as Führer.' (This sentence was omitted altogether by Greiner from his published text.)

Manstein's opinion unquestionably strengthened Hitler's determination. On November 24, arriving at Weichs's operations room, Manstein had emphatically rejected the general's judgement that Paulus had no alternative but to abandon Stalingrad; obviously a breakout was still possible and 'the surest way' – Manstein's report said – but 'nonetheless I am unable to share Army Group B's enthusiasm for a breakout as long as there are still adequate supplies – at least of armour-piercing ammunition, infantry ammunition, and fuel. This is vital.' Manstein added that a relief operation would be possible with reinforcements being moved up by the beginning of December. At the same time he radioed Paulus: 'We shall do everything to hew you out of there.'

* Regrettably published under the imprint of the well-known Institute of Contemporary History, Munich.

Manstein himself was engrossed in planning the relief offensive by Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army; but the forces at his disposal for this were steadily whittled away to buttress the Italian and Hungarian sectors. It was here that ever since mid-August Hitler had expected Stalin's strategic push toward Rostov to develop. Richthofen uncomfortably observed: 'It seems the Russians are going to attack the Italian sector too – a bad thing, as they will probably run faster than the Romanians.' Hitler, anxiously investigating the fighting capacity of the Italians and Hungarians, now observed that their provision with anti-tank guns had been badly neglected; he ordered this omission repaired immediately from captured French stocks. Manstein remained optimistic. On December 9 Jodl's deputy dictated into the OKW war diary: 'The Führer is very confident and plans to regain our former position on the Don. The first phase of the Russian winter offensive can be regarded as finished, without having shown any decisive successes.'

HITLER CONTEMPLATED minor losses of ground in the east philosophically. To lose comparable ground in Europe would however be catastrophic. This was why North Africa – as Europe's 'outfield' – was significant. This was why he was even now pouring troops and armour, including the very latest Tiger tanks, into Tunis.

Thoroughly dispirited, Rommel disagreed with this assessment.

On November 28 he arrived unannounced and without the Führer's permission at the Wolf's Lair. He hinted that Hitler ought to brace himself for the loss of Africa. 'We cannot hold on to Africa,' he warned. 'There's nothing for it but to evacuate as many Germans as we can from Africa.'

'What you propose is precisely the same as the generals proposed in 1941 in Russia,' retorted Hitler. 'They would have had me retreating to the German frontier. I didn't do it, and events proved me right. I won't do it here either.'

When Rommel described the desperate retreat that his men had fought across eight hundred miles of North Africa since El Alamein, and how his fifteen thousand combat troops had only five thousand rifles between then, Hitler shouted that the troops had thrown the other rifles away.

He ordered Göring to escort Rommel personally to Rome and get the Italians to speed up shipments to Africa. He flatly disbelieved the field marshal's claim that he lacked the gasoline to stand and fight.

'A gigantic army drove back from El Alamein to here,' commented Hitler, pointing to El Agheila on the map. 'They didn't drive on water!'

A few days later, late on December 3, he greeted General Hans-Jürgen von Arnim at the Wolf's Lair. Arnim was to command a new army in Tunisia. From this bridgehead Hitler planned to launch an offensive that would throw the enemy right out of Algeria and French Morocco.

Arnim's corps had been in heavy fighting on the Volga near Rzhev. He described to Hitler the fatigue and bravery of his troops, while Hitler nodded in appreciation. Hitler introduced him to Lieutenant-General Heinz Ziegler, then addressed Arnim again: 'Herr General, you are to fly to North Africa at once. As you know, the Allies have landed here' – he brushed the coastline with one hand – 'and I have decided to raise a new Panzer Army, the Fifth, against them. You will be under Italian command, and will work with Kesselring and Jodl.' Ziegler was to be his 'plenipotentiary deputy.'

He packed the two generals off to Rome, whither the Reichsmarschall had already gone, at once.

Göring's visit to Rome was not an unqualified success. He reported back to Hitler on December 11, but he had evidently telephoned his first impressions to him some days before. Mussolini, he said, was wallowing in despair – he had advised the Germans to wind up their pointless Russian campaign as best they could.

Hitler knew how precarious his ally's personal position was now. Air raids had inflicted heavy casualties in Naples and Turin. Clearly worried that Italy might make a deal with the enemy, he ordered Field Marshal Kesselring, Commander in Chief South, to start stockpiling maps of Italy in case Germany had to take over her defence. Hitler began planning a lengthy sojourn at the Berghof 'to clear his head for fresh decisions.' As soon as Manstein's relief-offensive had begun, he planned to leave for Berlin, where he would see Laval, and then go south to the Obersalzberg, where he would meet Mussolini and Antonescu.

Events in Russia were however to disrupt this plan.

Before returning to the eastern front, we can review the possible sources of fresh danger that Hitler perceived in the Mediterranean, now that the enemy had secured a base at its western end. He deduced that if the Axis did lose North Africa, the enemy's next thrust would be into the Balkans. They would probably bypass Crete; the islands of Rhodes or the Peloponnese might seem more attractive, particularly if Churchill planned to rehash the old Salonika campaign of World War I. Since Germany's eastern campaign was again halted, Turkey's friendship had cooled perceptibly; Hitler

therefore deemed it expedient to furnish fresh arms to the neutral Bulgarians to dissuade Turkey from any hostile adventures.

His anxiety about Spain had also grown during December 1942. At first he had turned a deaf ear on Franco's plea for modern weapons in case the enemy swept from North Africa into Spain or her African possessions. Hitler believed that the Spanish were too tenacious an opponent, and their country possessed too few advantages, for that. Instructing the Abwehr to step up its Intelligence activity throughout Spain and Portugal, Keitel however explained to Canaris, 'The Führer is particularly alert as to Spain, because Britain has already begun a "Stop Thief!" propaganda campaign such as usually precedes her own military operations.'

Hitler was in a quandary; his instinct told him that Spain would be neutral. But arms deliveries would be useless if they came too late. He therefore told Spain's General Muñoz Grandes that he agreed to entertain the Spanish needs, provided that General Franco solemnly undertook to use the weapons to ward off any British or American aggression.

Hitler could not understand why Britain was helping the United States. 'Any sensible Englishman must say to himself that Britain is going to have to foot the bill,' he told the Dutch Fascist leader Anton Mussert in mid-December. 'We have not the slightest reason to fight Britain. Even if we win we gain nothing from Britain. . . Britain ought to be glad to have in Germany a bulwark against Russia.' The day when Germany and Britain would join to rise up against American imperialism seemed farther away than ever.

Any uncertainty about France's loyalties was soon dispelled forever. Forschungsamt intercepts revealed the full extent of Darlan's long-planned treachery and even hinted that Marshal Pétain had been a willing party to it. General Weygand was already in German custody. Hitler ordered that General Maurice Gamelin, Léon Blum, and Edouard Daladier would have to be arrested too. When Heinrich Himmler came to the Wolf's Lair on December 10, Hitler authorised him to extract the several hundred thousand remaining Jews from France as well; at Himmler's suggestion those with influential relatives in America were to be held in a special camp 'under conditions that will keep them alive and well.'

The spirit that had tempered Hitler's demands at Compiègne was dead. Apart from a possible later *phalange africaine* to recapture France's lost colonies, her armed forces would henceforth be limited to an enlarged police force and *garde mobile*. 'The French police are good,' acknowledged Hitler. 'We'll harness them, we'll work only with the police. Himmler knows his

policemen! He employs the most reprehensible methods himself so this will make them all partners in crime. It will be a police alliance!'

Hitler relished his private conferences with Himmler. The SS chief was always bringing something new. It was Himmler who was most assiduously propagating the new 'European' spirit: in the SS panzer division 'Viking,' now fighting in the Caucasus, the young men of Scandinavia and the Netherlands were united with the finest German troops; Himmler was keeping potential dissidents like Halder and Brauchitsch under discreet surveillance and it was Himmler who had secured access to Hitler for the rocket scientists of Peenemünde. 'For your information,' Himmler cabled his Intelligence chief on December 5, 'the Führer is very satisfied with our reports.'

In one of these, dated December 4, the Gestapo announced the 'taking out' of a major arsenal of the Polish underground in Warsaw: the four-room house harboured not only the usual quantities of explosives and detonators, but also 'three flasks of typhus bacilli, seventeen sealed rubber tubes presumably containing bacteria, and one fountain pen with instructions for use for spreading bacteria.' A more enigmatic Himmler document is a letter to Gestapo chief Heinrich Müller, stating that 'the Führer has authorised the transmission of such Intelligence data as the OKW and foreign minister agree to, in order to keep up the "radio game" with Moscow, even though this would normally be *prima facie* tantamount to treason.'

IT WAS the night of December 11–12, 1942; for the first time in many months Hitler's insomnia had returned. He knew that rumours were sweeping Germany that an entire army had been encircled by the enemy at Stalingrad. Manstein's relief offensive was slated to begin in a few hours' time, but there were grounds for disquiet. Göring had kept his promise by marshalling a huge armada of transport aircraft for the airlift; and yet the airlift was clearly failing. Worse, during the eleventh a Russian infantry attack had developed on the Italian Eighth Army sector north-west of Stalingrad; though it was still moderate in strength, and although the terrain and their superiority in artillery favoured the Italians, Hitler had steeled himself against the inevitable catastrophe the moment the Russians now began the main assault. He guessed they were only waiting for the Luftwaffe to be grounded by foul weather. He had ordered the 17th Panzer Division unloaded behind the Italian front; although it might make the difference between success and failure for Manstein's relief operation if it now had to begin with only the 6th and 23rd panzer divisions in its spearhead.

Was it the right decision? Between them those divisions had 233 good tanks, more than the Russian divisions opposing them. 'We've got enough tanks,' Hitler told Zeitzler the next day. Jodl reassured them both. 'He'll manage everything,' meaning Manstein. 'It is just that the area is so vast and our divisions so few. The enemy just flows around behind them again.'

It was the sense of uncertainty that kept Hitler awake. If they had abandoned Stalingrad, the whole point of the Russian campaign would have been lost. 'We have shed too much blood for that.' The campaign had now cost the German army 371,000 dead. Two days earlier Bormann had recorded Hitler as saying he would never capitulate; he would keep fighting even if he had to draft fourteen- and sixteen-year-olds into the battle. 'It would still be better for them to die fighting the East than for us to lose the war and see them tortured and sold into slavery.'

In his mind's eye Hitler could already see the glorious moment six days hence when the siege of Stalingrad would be lifted. First a narrow corridor – and the taut-faced columns of Manstein's troops, dishevelled from battle, would come pouring through with food- and gasoline-laden trucks bringing up the rear. In the city itself the word would pass from starving mouth to mouth that salvation was there. This was the vision that sustained him. The uglier possibility was banished from his mind. He could not believe that Manstein would fail – unless, of course, the Italian front caved in first. He bitterly reproached himself for not having swept straight through Stalingrad that summer. 'Things would have gone faster if we hadn't got bogged down in Voronezh.' Lastly, he tormented himself with the question of whether or not he could now risk going to the Berghof to see Mussolini. 'We will just have to see how things go today and tomorrow,' he told Zeitzler.

Manstein's attack began well the next morning. An atmosphere of euphoria pervaded the OKW. 'Little worry about carrying attack through as the enemy's tank strength is strongly reduced,' noted their official historian. Hitler, however, refused to be led astray by the OKW's impatient optimism. Stalin was after a far bigger prize: he also wanted to cut off the retreat of the entire army group in the Caucasus, half a million men. On the fourteenth, the 6th Panzer Division destroyed forty-one tanks; soon the 17th Panzer Division, which Hitler had after all made available, would be joined to the attack. Already it was halfway to Stalingrad. Then, on the sixteenth, came the event Hitler had feared, as the Russians hurled three armies at the narrow sector of the Don front he had entrusted to his Italian allies north-west of Stalingrad. Two bomber wings were diverted from

Richthofen's support operations for the relief attack, to help the Italians – a diversion Richthofen labelled 'abandoning the Sixth Army – it's murder.'

How well would even German troops have fought against such odds? After two days of plucky fighting the Italians took to their heels, tearing an immense breach between Manstein's and Weichs's army groups.

The military calamity was not without its effect on Hitler's heart. 'Sent for during the evening,' noted Professor Morell on a data card on December 17, 1942. 'He said that Göring had told him he took a tablet of Cardiazol [a heart drug] whenever he felt weak or dizzy. Wouldn't it do him, the Führer, good too if he suddenly felt funny during some vital affair?' Morell advised him not to: Göring suffered from low, Hitler from high blood pressure. 'One might burst a blood vessel,' the doctor warned and reminded Hitler of the health crises caused by his blood pressure in August 1941 and July 1942 at Vinnitsa. Hitler now sombrely asked Morell to tell him frankly if things should ever look black for him, as 'there are some really vital decisions I have to take.' He said he had no fear of death – that would be just a relief for him; all he had now was just one upset after another, and no time that he could call his own. 'I live only for the Fatherland, for Germany,' he pathetically told Morell. 'There's no cure against death, that I know. But if ever my condition should become dangerous, then you must tell me!'

Perhaps rather tactlessly, Morell decided it was time to disclose to his Führer the news that his heart was indeed seriously ailing. ('Since he demanded always to be precisely informed by me on his condition, I referred to the presence of a coronary sclerosis, which is why I have been giving him iodine for some time now. Subsequent electrocardiograms have confirmed my diagnosis, I said.') Morell offered the rather thin consolation that this was not unusual in hardworking people over forty-five: 'As the blood vessels of the coronary artery contract,' he added, 'one may get attacks of angina pectoris.' For this reason Morell always carried nitro-glycerine tablets and Esdesan around with him. 'By injecting glucose,' he said, 'I am also doing what I can to strengthen your heart and to dehydrate the system.'

The Italian foreign minister, Count Galeazzo Ciano, encountered a forbidding atmosphere when he arrived at the Wolf's Lair at noon the next day, December 18. His main purpose in coming was to deliver Mussolini's 'hypothetical' question: would it not even now be possible to reach a political settlement with Russia à la Brest-Litovsk? Hitler patiently replied that this would be irreconcilable with his objective of Lebensraum. It was a false illusion for Mussolini to believe that Germany could ever abstract divisions

from the east to ward off possible defeat in the Mediterranean. He sugared the pill with caustic references to the French. As the Italians left, Keitel instructed Admiral Canaris to keep an eye on Italy ('even though it is not to be anticipated that she will defect'). A member of Ciano's entourage inquired of the OKW whether the Italian Eighth Army had suffered heavy casualties; he was told: 'None at all. They never stopped running.'

With the collapse of the Italian army, a terrible new situation confronted Germany's Sixth Army in Stalingrad. Only two alternatives were left to it: to push a battle group south-west to meet the relieving panzer divisions, while still retaining the strategic stranglehold on Stalingrad; or to implement 'Thunderclap,' a breakout by the entire Sixth Army – abandoning its tens of thousands of wounded troops to the mercies of the enemy. Zeitzler put Manstein's case for 'Thunderclap' to Hitler during the war conference late on December 18. Hitler, clutching a bunch of coloured pencils in one hand, watched the ominous red arrows of the Red Army's offensive plunge ever closer to the airfields from which the Luftwaffe was mounting its airlift into Stalingrad. The logistic difficulties of launching 'Thunderclap' seemed insuperable: Paulus demanded no less than 1,800 tons of food and 4,000 tons of fuel first. (Although the Luftflotte managed to fly in all of 270 tons that day, this was twice the average so far.)

By December 19 the three divisions of Manstein's relief force had reached the Myshkova River, some forty miles from Paulus's perimeter. The next day, one last push was made, only to be firmly blocked by the Russians. Hitler had ordered three more divisions rushed east from France, but it would take three weeks even to get them moving.

At six p.m. on December 19, Manstein radioed to the Sixth Army an order to begin 'Operation Winter Storm' – an attempt to extend the south-western perimeter by a limited tank attack under General Hube, thus linking up with the relief force outside. Paulus was also directed to stand by for 'Thunderclap' in case Hitler gave permission. But even Paulus referred to 'Thunderclap' as a 'catastrophic solution.'

It was a heartrending situation and one that the lesser commanders were glad to pass to Hitler for decision. He knew that Paulus's army was already tying down over seventy Russian divisions and brigades. If the Sixth Army pulled out now, the enemy might move to cut off the entire southern front.

Hitler steeled himself therefore against the noisy counsels of his commanders. Göring and Jeschonnek supported him. Hitler refused to speak

with Manstein even on the telephone. Zeitzler and Manstein nonetheless argued loudly that only the immediate withdrawal of Kleist's Army Group A from the Caucasus would release enough reserves to prevent a catastrophe. When Zeitzler returned to his demand that the whole Sixth Army be ordered to break out, Hitler irritably replied, 'The Sixth Army must stand fast. Even if I cannot lift the siege until spring.'

Zeitzler accused the Reichsmarschall of lying about the Luftwaffe's capabilities, and he began to report the true airlift tonnage daily to Hitler each morning. On December 21 over 360 tons were flown in, but now the two closest airfields had been overrun. General Martin Fiebig, whose Eighth Air Corps was wholly engaged in the airlift, wrote: 'One wonders whether the Führer has got the picture – whether he really knows the state of our men and their capacity for effort, and whether the Russian strength isn't being underestimated once more.'

This time nerve alone was not enough. A year later Hitler would explain his philosophy thus in a secret speech to his downhearted generals: 'Let this much be understood – nothing shakes me, whatever may happen. Some may think me heartless to insist on fighting to the last man just because the enemy will also let more blood that way, rather than to undertake this manoeuvre or that. It has nothing to do with heartlessness, only with my realisation and conviction that *this* is the action to be taken. . . It is a matter of supreme indifference to me what posterity may think.'

Richthofen consoled the mutinous Luftwaffe generals with this argument: the Führer had been right before, and nobody had understood him then either. 'Perhaps we shall all be chuckling over this crisis when May comes!' Fiebig for one was unconvinced. 'Richthofen mentioned yesterday that entire armies are often lost without any effect on the outcome of the war. What can the Führer himself be thinking? . . . What will the Russians do with this quarter-million? They can but kill them, they haven't the food for them. Death will take a huge toll. Each man one last bullet for himself!'

On December 27, issuing instructions to the army for the coming months, Hitler decreed once more that Kleist was to defend his existing line in the Caucasus. The eventual liberation of the Sixth Army must guide all other considerations; thus the town of Kotelnikovo must be held too, as a starting point for that offensive. Meanwhile the SS panzer division 'Viking' would be moved up from the Caucasus and the 7th Panzer Division brought from France early in January. A new battalion of Tiger tanks would also be provided.

That evening, December 27, General Zeitzler, the Chief of the General Staff, arrived unannounced at the Wolf's Lair. Ignoring the adjutants' protests, he tackled the Führer in his private bunker; Hitler was moodily listening to records of Beethoven. The general spoke earnestly, and ended with the words: 'If you do not order the withdrawal of the Caucasus front now, you will have a second Stalingrad on your hands.'

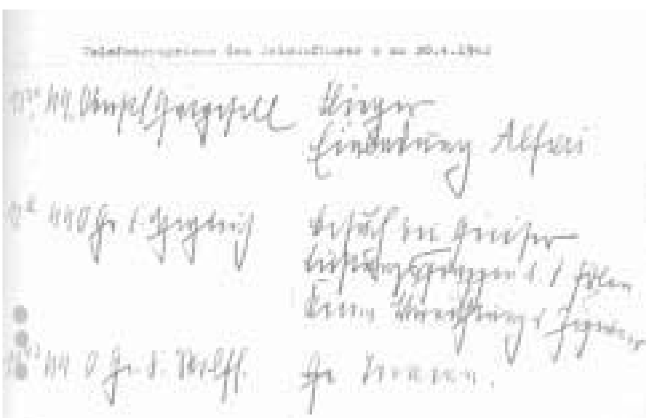
Hitler pondered briefly, then curtly told him: 'Very well, do as you wish!'

He regretted this almost immediately, and telephoned the General Staff's nearby headquarters several times to try to intercept Zeitzler on his return. Eventually Zeitzler himself came to the phone. Hitler said, 'About the withdrawal from the Caucasus – wait a bit. We'll have another talk about it.'

Zeitzler's voice came back: 'Too late – the order has already gone out.'

Hitler said, 'Very well,' and irritably replaced the receiver.

He may have sensed that now a retreat from Russia was beginning that would not be halted at the frontiers of Germany.



On Hitler's birthday, April 20, 1942, Himmler passes on to SS Obergruppenführer Heydrich the order (at line 5): 'No annihilation of gypsies' (HIMMLER FILES)



Hitler consoles the sons of SS Obergruppenfuhrer Reinhard Heydrich at the state funeral of their assassinated father in Berlin (AUTHOR'S COLLECTION)

Retreat



HITLER SAW in the New Year, 1943, sitting alone in his bunker with Martin Bormann, his Party secretary, until after 4:00 A.M. This itself presaged the coming times: in the year that followed a significant part of Hitler's domestic authority was delegated to a three-man cabal – Bormann, Keitel, and Lammers – convening in what had been the Cabinet Room of the Berlin chancellery, while Goebbels hovered like a predator calling impatiently for the mantle of 'Führer of the home front' to be bestowed on him.

Hitler was rarely in Berlin. He dedicated himself to his war, sustained by the prospect of coming offensives, of the growing U-boat campaign, and of increased panzer and aircraft production, and by 'evidence' that Stalin's reserves were at last declining. At night he could not sleep, for before his eyes there danced the arrow-covered maps of the evening's war conference, until at last the sedatives dragged him down into unconsciousness.

For the next six months he proved more accessible to the advice of the General Staff. The retreats that marked these months were considerable military achievements. Only at Stalingrad and in the first disordered retreat to the Donets did the army lose equipment of any consequence. Thereafter the withdrawals were planned and fought so as to inflict the maximum hardship and casualties on the enemy. Still sure of their superiority, the German soldiers felt that they were being overwhelmed by circumstance, not by the Russian army: by lack of oil, by inclement weather, by unreliable allies. Their trust in Hitler remained unshaken, but the security service reports indicated that at home the first mutterings of popular discontent were becoming audible.

General Eberhard von Mackensen's First Panzer Army began its withdrawal from the Caucasus on January 1, 1943, and completed it thirty days

later, having covered over four hundred miles under appalling conditions – eighteen-horse teams struggled to haul the heavy guns through the mountains. Simultaneously General Ruoff's Seventeenth Army withdrew from the western Caucasus. Thus at a cost of 226 lives an entire army group, some 700,000 men, was saved. Against Zeitzler's advice, however, Hitler directed only four of Mackensen's divisions to Rostov; the rest were added to Ruoff's army, which was ordered during January to hold a bridgehead on the Taman peninsula – just over the narrow straits from the Crimea. This would, argued Hitler, show friend and foe alike that in 1943 he again intended to go over to the offensive. With Albert Speer he even adumbrated plans to build across the Strait of Kerch a giant bridge linking the Crimea to the 'Goth's Head,' as the Taman bridgehead was termed.

Meanwhile, in the dying days of the old year Hitler had conceived a grand operational design. He would speedily transfer the three most powerful SS divisions and the 'Gross Deutschland' infantry division from Army Group Centre, assemble them south-east of Kharkov, and strike north of the Don toward Stalingrad as soon as the weather improved. That would be mid-February. Paulus's spirits were raised by Hitler's convincing assurances.

Hitler promised that the Luftwaffe would carry 750 tons of supplies in on days when the weather was good. Göring did his best: already 480 Junkers and Heinkels were committed solely to the airlift; still more planes were sent – 100 more Junkers, 10 Focke-Wulf Condors, and several Heinkel 177 heavy bombers too. A visit by a responsible Luftwaffe commander would have been more fruitful, but Jeschonnek could not spare the time and Göring averted his gaze from the seemingly inevitable disaster.

Despite his Stalingrad worries, Hitler telephoned Frau Troost in person from East Prussia to congratulate her on the solid gold cassette she had designed for Göring's warrant as Reichsmarschall – correctly speculating that this female *arbiter legendarium* would noise his evident well-being abroad. But his misgivings in fact were multiplying. Colonel von Below, his Luftwaffe adjutant, showed him a private letter from a relative trapped in Stalingrad, and its references to the Sixth Army's commanders were not encouraging.

A question mark was placed against Paulus's name; General Arthur Schmidt and General Walter von Seydlitz were marked 'sack 'em,' but General Hube was praised: 'He's the man!'

THE YEAR had opened with an exasperating series of errors over an Allied convoy to North Russia. According to naval Intelligence it was escorted

only by destroyers. Raeder's liaison officer, Admiral Theodor Krancke, had asked Hitler for his blessing for a sortie by *Hipper*, *Lützow*, and six destroyers to attack the convoy off Bear Island; the pocket battleship *Lützow* would afterward break out into the Atlantic – 'Operation Aurora.'

Throughout New Year's Eve the Führer was left in virtual ignorance of the progress of the battle. Under his impatient pressure Krancke somewhat tactlessly showed him the only two radio messages bearing on the battle's outcome. Admiral Kummetz had merely radioed: 'Break off attack, no enemy cruiser with convoy, not possible to detach *Lützow* for "Aurora."' But the shadowing U-boat had radioed as the Arctic dusk engulfed the scene: 'I see just red!'

Hitler interpreted the above messages optimistically: he bragged to Ribbentrop that the navy had just won a 'magnificent victory.' Not until next afternoon did he learn the woeful truth: British cruisers had been lurking nearby, his own task force had run for cover, the cruiser *Hipper* was badly damaged. A German destroyer had mistakenly joined the enemy and paid dearly for her error.

Hitler raged at the navy's lack of aggressive spirit. He announced that he was going to lay up all the big ships, and he ordered Krancke to instruct Raeder by telephone to come to the Wolf's Lair at once. Raeder's stock with Hitler was already low: he had been a less frequent visitor to the Führer than his critics. Out of jealousy, Göring had furnished Hitler with a string of complaints about the admiral. Speer had done the same, angered by Raeder's refusal to abrogate control over naval armament to the munitions ministry. As recently as January 4, Speer had reported the navy to Hitler for hoarding sixty oil-paper-wrapped 105-millimetre anti-aircraft guns in the depot. (In fact they were there for ranging and calibration tests.)

The admiral arrived late on January 6. Hitler berated him for ninety minutes on the big ships' failure 'ever since 1864' to fight a single naval action right through. Neither its mutiny in 1918 nor its scuttling in 1919 were exactly glorious episodes. He wanted the ships laid up, and their armament built into the coastal defences. Raeder tendered his resignation. Asked to submit the names of two possible successors, Raeder suggested Admiral Rolf Carls or alternatively – though with marked distaste – Dönitz.

On January 14, Raeder submitted a written protest, predicting 'shrieks of triumph' from the enemy when they learned that the Germans had mothballed their own biggest warships. Hitler heaped sarcasm on the document, but Krancke could see that he was impressed nonetheless.

As Hitler told Marshal Antonescu on January 10, neither in the Punic wars nor in the Thirty Years' War nor in the Seven Years' War had any of the statesmen been able to predict how it would all end; yet their single-minded purpose had brought them to victory.

This was whistling in the dark. On the twelfth the Russians weighed into the Hungarian Second Army, striking toward Svoboda, just as Hitler had predicted. The Hungarians suffered 30,000 dead within days. Hitler's tactical measures – rushing anti-tank guns to the Hungarians and calling in three more divisions from France – came too late. On the entire eastern front, he learned, he now had less than five hundred tanks; the Russians had five thousand. With the help of Goebbels and Bormann he planned to wring a million troops out of the German population by mid-1943: in December he had ordered German industry to release two hundred thousand men for call-up by the end of March; a month later the demand was stepped up to eight hundred thousand men.

Twice in January Hitler called Speer to the Wolf's Lair and told him he wanted bigger, better, and more tanks. On the seventeenth he decided to launch a new production programme, the 'Adolf Hitler Tank Programme.' He buttonholed Admiral Krancke after the war conference and told him unemotionally that all warship construction larger than destroyers was to cease forthwith so that Speer could have the manpower he needed for tanks. 'Even if it is only five thousand men it will help,' Hitler noted.

When Krancke protested, Hitler again harked back to the inconsequential naval action off Bear Island. 'The tanks that convoy brought through have now probably cost many more soldiers their lives south of Lake Ladoga,' he said. Krancke reminded Hitler of his standing orders against risking the big ships against any superior enemy; but Hitler referred to the *Graf Spee* and *Bismarck* episodes as proof that it was the spirit that was wanting. Not long afterward, Admiral Dönitz stood before Hitler, eagerly conniving at the consignment of the big ships to the wreckers' yard. Raeder retired into obscurity. Before he left he begged Hitler to protect the navy from Göring, and he warned his successor not to put his trust in Speer.

At fifty, Göring's star was in rapid decline. In mid-January Hitler sent for Göring's deputy, Milch, and put him in charge of the struggling airlift to Stalingrad – a step which the jealous Göring had urgently counselled against. Along the southern front as far north as Voronezh an avalanche of Soviet troops and tanks was pouring through the breach created by the Romanian,

Italian, and Hungarian collapse. Hitler's object was to keep Paulus's army fighting for six more weeks at least – until it could be relieved by Paul Hausser's SS panzer corps. But General von Weichs cabled that his army group was left with barely seven divisions along a two-hundred-mile front: he saw no possible way of holding the enemy.

At any moment the Russians might encircle the Second Army. From within Stalingrad strong protests were now emanating from the Sixth Army, too. 'Mein Führer!' Paulus radioed on the seventeenth. 'Your orders on the supply of my army are not being obeyed.'

The Luftwaffe generals denied Paulus's allegations. Göring later bitterly accused Paulus of being too soft a commander – of feeding thousands of Russian civilians and useless injured German soldiers. 'One can't burden oneself with wounded men beyond hope of recovery,' he said. 'They must be left to lapse into the hereafter.'

General Hube, again flown out of Stalingrad to the Wolf's Lair, feelingly reproached Hitler. 'The Luftwaffe airlift has failed. Why don't you kill off some of your Luftwaffe generals?' Hitler replied in level terms, 'I have got it all in hand.' He assigned Hube to Milch's emergency staff, but turned a deaf ear on his advice to appoint a Commander in Chief East, suspecting that the advice had come from Manstein.

Richthofen painted a vivid portrait of Manstein in this month of crisis: 'In my view Manstein is a write-off, trembling in every limb and looking years older.' Disaster seemed inevitable. At Hitler's headquarters, Zeitzler pointedly introduced 'Stalingrad' rations for his staff. On January 22 the Russians again called on Paulus to surrender. Hitler remarked that the Russians would abide by no conventions – no prisoners would survive long; on the other hand, every day the Sixth Army fought on would help to stabilise the other fronts. Paulus radioed a dignified, even fatalistic, response to Hitler's instructions: 'Your orders are being executed. Long live Germany.'

HITLER CALCULATED that the word of his soldiers' heroism at Stalingrad would itself be worth many divisions in the months to come. The legend of Stalingrad would enhance each later fortress's invincibility in enemy eyes. To this end Goebbels instructed that brutal frankness now be observed in describing the situation of German soldiers in Stalingrad. Above all, the Bolshevik victory communiqués were to pass unchallenged – the better to bring a shiver of apprehension to the peoples of the West. On January 24, German newspapers for the first time revealed the death throes of the Sixth

Army. Twenty-nine thousand injured troops had been evacuated by the time Paulus's last airfield was overrun. His remaining soldiers had been allowed to write one last letter home. When the last Heinkel took off, it brought out nineteen injured soldiers and seven bags of mail.

In Stalingrad, Paulus's army had been severed into two pockets; but his men fought on. The Luftwaffe crews flew two and sometimes even three sorties a night to discharge food and ammunition over Stalingrad.

'On the anniversary of your assumption of power,' Paulus radioed Hitler, 'the Sixth Army sends greetings to the Führer. The swastika still flutters over Stalingrad. May our struggle stand as an example to generations as yet unborn, never to surrender no matter how desperate the odds. Then Germany will be victorious. Heil, mein Führer!'

Hitler's reply was a proclamation broadcast to the German nation. It ended: 'In this fight we shall have the Almighty on our side. We shall not shy from shedding our own blood, because one day a new land will blossom from the sacrifices of the fallen. And our Teutonic state, our German nation, shall emerge victorious!'

At Zeitzler's instance – though not without misgivings – Hitler promoted Paulus to field marshal. Since no German field marshal had yet surrendered he thus pressed the pistol into the unfortunate army commander's hand. At 7:35 A.M. on the thirty-first Sixth Army headquarters radioed: 'In our bunker we listened to the Führer's Proclamation and saluted the national anthem for perhaps the last time.' Almost at once they added, 'The Russians are outside the door,' and then, 'We are destroying . . .' The radio went dead.

Hitler probably spared little attention for Stalingrad that day, for alarm bells were ringing throughout his dominions. In North Africa Rommel was retreating toward Tunisia; Tripoli – and thus Libya itself – had been abandoned by the Axis. In north-west Germany, American heavy bombers had just attacked Wilhelmshaven in broad daylight; and on January 30 fast British bombers had penetrated to Berlin at noon. ('An impertinence! It's called the Mosquito! And it's made of wood!') The Luftwaffe's own heavy bomber, the Heinkel 177, was still not perfected. Nineteen sorties had been flown to Stalingrad: six had been ended by engine fires in mid-air. Now Germany was compelled to retreat along the entire eastern front. Kharkov itself was in danger. In the Demyansk pocket south of Leningrad, so jealously defended by Hitler these many months, supplies were running low; it would

have to be given up at last. There seemed to be concrete evidence that the Allies would soon invade Portugal; thus divisions were tied down in the west.

Hitler had turned in at 2:30 A.M., earlier than usual, that first day of February. He was shortly awakened with word from Moscow: defying tradition, Paulus had surrendered, as had eleven German and five Romanian generals. Hitler was thunderstruck. He could never forgive this field marshal that he had lacked the routine courage of every captain who had gone down with his ship, that he had not mustered the same bravery as had a score of Soviet commissars and commanders in identically hopeless situations. 'The others stick together, form a phalanx, and keep the last bullet for themselves. Imagine, even a woman with an ounce of pride in her will lock herself in and put a bullet in her brain just because she has heard a few insulting words!* . . . Here is a man who can look on while fifty or sixty thousand of his troops are dying and defending themselves with courage to the end – how can he give himself up to the Bolsheviks?' When Speer's deputy, Karl Saur, telephoned the Führer at three A.M. with the January production figures, for the first time Hitler did not want to hear them.

Throughout February appalling crises gripped the eastern front. Weichs was removed – his army group had virtually dissolved. Through the yawning gap thundered the Soviet herd. 'I won't be able to sleep again without sedatives until the breach is plugged,' declared Hitler. Only his staff stenographers shared his awful, all-embracing knowledge of the true picture. The diary of one of them reveals that a stenographer who had arrived as recently as December had suffered a nervous breakdown by mid-February. Frightened of fresh bloody nightmares, Hitler postponed retiring longer every night. He explained to an army doctor two years later: 'I have to relax and speak about something else, otherwise I keep seeing the staff maps in the dark, and my brain goes grinding on and it takes me hours on end to drop off.'

In two months the Red Army had demolished five armies – German, Romanian, Italian, and Hungarian. By the end of February the Russians had recaptured Kursk, Belgorod, Kraznodar, Demyansk, Rostov and Kharkov. Hitler might even have to abandon the Donets Basin. 'I shall have to think it over,' he declared on February 1, referring to the latter prospect. 'But one

* Was this perhaps a revealing allusion to the 1931 suicide of Geli Raubal?

thing I can say now: if I do [abandon the Donets] there will be no further possibility of bringing the war in the east to an *offensive* conclusion. Let's make no mistake about that!'

Still Hitler would not contemplate a political settlement with Stalin. Japan's Ambassador Oshima had called on January 20 and left disappointed in this respect; indeed, Hitler urgently demanded a Japanese attack on Stalin in the Far East. When Hewel brought to him Ribbentrop's renewed proposal for peace feelers toward Moscow, Hitler refused even to read it. 'First we must win a major military victory,' he told Ribbentrop afterward. 'Then we can see.' It was a familiar circuitous argument.

In presenting his plans to mobilise the native populations of the East against Stalin, Rosenberg fared no better than Ribbentrop. By early 1943 the Germans had over 130,000 'Eastern troops' and there were Russian generals willing to lead them against Stalin; but Hitler suspected that it would be playing with dynamite – that it would merely be a rekindling of Russian nationalism under a different management.

When in February 1943 Rosenberg read him a lengthy proposal for replacing the Soviet collective system with private enterprise and property again, raising legions from all the Soviet Union's ethnic groups, restoring their freedom of religion, and issuing a suitable political proclamation to them, Hitler responded merely that he might return to some of the proposals 'after the coming spring offensive began.' Zeitzler mentioned to him that the captured Russian general Andrei Andreyevich Vlasov was willing to lead a 'National Army of Liberation' against Stalin, but Hitler saw in the general only a useful propaganda tool. 'What a swine Vlasov must be,' he commented to his own staff. 'He owes everything to Stalin. It was Stalin who made a general out of him. Now he bites the hand that fed him.'

Not that he expected Paulus to act any differently. 'A few weeks in the Lubyanka prison and he will say anything,' predicted Hitler. 'Just wait and see. . . It won't be long before he's speaking on Moscow radio.'

The cost of Stalingrad had been high. Göring's Luftwaffe had lost 488 aircraft and about 1,000 airmen in the airlift. Only 108,000 of Paulus's troops had survived to enter Soviet captivity, of which only 6,000 were ever to see Germany again. On February 4 however Gehlen's Intelligence division estimated that 107 Soviet divisions and brigades had been tied down by the battle for the city, together with 13 tank regiments; he could do little more than guess at where Stalin's next offensive would begin.

Hitler was still optimistic that shortages of food and raw materials would defeat Stalin. His agencies had captured a Russian document listing their casualties by now as 11,200,000 dead, missing, and injured. It seemed well worth fighting on.

He spent much of February 1943 mending the fences torn by these winter's storms. On Sunday the seventh he invited the gauleiters to his headquarters and briefed them on the disaster. Herbert Backe dictated this summary to his wife the next day:

> Sunday at the Führer's. The Führer spoke. First words were: 'What you are witnessing is a catastrophe of unheard-of magnitude. The Russians broke through, the Romanians gave up, the Hungarians didn't even put up a fight, for five days German troops from the rear held the front in a thin line thrown across the breakthrough locations. We've lost four armies in and around Stalingrad.'
>
> Compares our situation with Kolin and Kunersdorf, says that if Frederick had had weapons like ours, they'd never have called him The Great because then his Seven Years' War would have been over in two months. The Führer again praised Speer. . .
>
> The Führer also said: 'If the German people fails, then it does not deserve that we fight for its future; then we can write it off with equanimity.' Not the right attitude of mind.

The gauleiters were satisfied by Hitler's speech, but the damage to the generals' confidence in him was less easily repaired. General Schmundt, whom he had sent on a fact-finding tour of Army Group Don just before Stalingrad fell, must have faithfully reported the ugly mood brewing there – that Manstein, Milch, and Richthofen were unanimous that so long as Hitler directed each battalion in person the army would always lack the rapid, incisive direction from above that it needed for victory; in short, that Hitler should appoint a Commander in Chief East. They clearly favoured Manstein; but though Hitler accepted him as their greatest military commander when on the offensive, in their present dilemma he felt they needed a tough, tenacious bulldog of a man – and with a flair for improvisation.

Milch, who flew straight in from the Stalingrad front with Hube on February 3, received a hostile hearing; Göring had just bragged to Hitler that two thousand new aircraft had been manufactured in January. Hitler snapped at Milch: 'Let's see if you can keep it up!' He stressed the need for

a cheap, primitive transport plane capable of making the round trip to Africa without refuelling. He rebuked Milch so severely for the calamitous record of the Heinkel 177 bomber project that a few days later the field marshal gasped to his staff, 'I stood in front of the Führer like a very small boy who has not done his sums properly.'

Manstein and Kluge, summoned to the Wolf's Lair on the sixth, fared no better. Hitler charmed the former with a frank admission that he alone was responsible for Stalingrad – not Göring. 'He is the man I have chosen as my successor, and that is why I cannot burden him with the blame for Stalingrad.' After a four-hour display of obstinacy, he flattered Manstein by agreeing to his demand that the eastern Donets region should be abandoned to release the Fourth Panzer Army for the coming German offensive on his army group's western flank. At long last Hitler also bowed to Zeitzler's recommendation that the uneconomical three-hundred-mile-long salient around Rzhev and Vyazma should be abandoned in favour of the far shorter chord-line in the rear; but Kluge had to promise to make the twenty-one divisions thus released available for a great spring offensive. The fighting retreat from Vyazma and Rzhev – code-named 'Buffalo' – began in March, the first German tactical triumph of 1943.

These field marshals were still putty in Hitler's hands, the generals were more difficult. When General von Richthofen arrived at the Wolf's Lair with Göring on February 11, he said bluntly that now they must get a grip on the ground organisation of the army: *of course* they would be short of men as long as divisions that were twelve thousand-strong still put only six hundred actual combat troops into the front line. 'The Führer asked me point-blank what I think of Manstein,' Richthofen dictated into his diary.

> I said that he is the best tactician and combat commander we have . . . but that Manstein, like all army commanders, is only really interested in operations and tactics. . .
>
> I stressed that the army commanders were all right . . . but must be given tactical freedom to act as their own local experience dictated. Leading them by the scruff of the neck as though they were children just did harm. The Führer said if he hadn't led them like that they would have been fighting in Germany by now. Above all I suggested that it was absolutely essential for him to have personal contact with them. If – and this particularly concerned him as Führer – he couldn't visit the armies for some reason or other I was not aware of, then they must be summoned

> at least once a month to talk over plans and possibilities with him. . .
>
> The Führer cursed his immediate advisers; he tells them everything but they brief him falsely and do nothing. He took it calmly when I retorted that this wasn't of the slightest importance either to us at the front or to future historians. He alone is answerable.

Hitler decided it was time Richthofen was made a field marshal too.

When the gauleiters had mustered at the Wolf's Lair, Hitler had congratulated Goebbels on his post-Stalingrad propaganda and unconditionally approved the propaganda minister's oft-stated demand for total war. It was what 'the people' wanted.

To Hitler the opposition was an infinitesimal, misguided minority that had to be crushed. When a handful of Munich students scattered leaflets calling for Hitler's overthrow, the ringleaders were arrested and condemned to death by the People's Court. 'Perhaps there are those who say it is incomprehensible that the People's Court acts so ruthlessly,' Hitler thundered in a secret speech to his generals later. 'A man who just distributed leaflets . . . or another, a university professor, and two students, who distributed leaflets are also executed. But if the professor and students responsible had been at the front, they might be just as dead now, who knows? It's a risk every soldier takes all the time.'

AT ZAPOROZH'YE on the Dnieper the huge hydroelectric power station had just been rebuilt by AEG, the major German electric corporation, and electricity was again flowing to the coal mines and munitions plants of the surrounding Ukraine. Speer had recently shown Hitler the completion dates of his Project Ivan – the rapid expansion of the heavy chemical, nitrogen, and explosives industries of the Donets region. Hitler had anxiously ordered extra anti-aircraft batteries to protect the power station, but unless Manstein's sluggish counteroffensive in the Ukraine gathered momentum, it was clear that the whole region would soon be overrun.

To the consternation of Hitler's staff, Zeitzler suggested that Hitler should fly out to Manstein's headquarters at Zaporozh'ye in person. When Göring indignantly objected to the risk, Zeitzler sardonically pointed out: 'The Reichsmarschall will be able to darken the skies with his fighter squadrons. There's no risk!' That night Hitler's staff stenographer wrote in his diary: 'At this evening's conference the Führer announced his decision to go to the front and take over command of Army Group South; this means break-

ing camp here.' Hitler decided to take with him just Zeitzler and Jodl – to whom he had finally extended his hand once again on January 30 – together with Schmundt, Hewel, and his doctor Morell. Keitel, Bormann, and the other adjutants stayed behind at the Wolf's Lair.

The long flight south began as soon as it was light on February 17, 1943. 'By afternoon the Führer's bunker was deserted,' wrote a newly arrived private secretary, Gertrud (Traudl) Humps in a post-war manuscript. 'It was strange, the hush that suddenly descended on the whole compound. It was as if the main dynamo of the concern had stopped. This was the first time I sensed how much Hitler's personality acted as a mainspring for all these men – the puppet-master, who held the strings of all the marionettes in his hands, had suddenly let them fall.'

NO SECRET was made of Hitler's arrival at Manstein's headquarters. 'There were cordons everywhere,' Field Marshal von Richthofen wrote in his diary. 'Everybody that I asked in the streets where army group HQ was, smiled scornfully and said, "You won't get near it – the Führer's there!" . . . Found the Führer in midst of big war conference. I reported to him. Much beating about the bush, no real opinions, mutual tension, an atmosphere you could cut with a knife. Führer then withdrew to his quarters without reaching any decisions. . . Führer very pleasant to me, placid, clear-thinking: the question is, has he the necessary implements and ability to convert his clear thoughts into orders?'

The next evening, February 18, German radio broadcast throughout occupied Europe Goebbels's defiant Sportpalast speech whipping a vast audience of Berliners into a frenzy with his proclamation of total war.*

Next morning Hitler himself addressed this effective proclamation to the troops on the eve of their counteroffensive between the Dnieper and Donets rivers:

> Soldiers of Army Group South, airmen of the Fourth Air Force!
>
> The outcome of a crucial battle depends on you!
>
> A thousand kilometres away from the Reich's frontiers the fate of Germany's present and future is in the balance. . . The entire German

* See this author's analysis of the total war speech in *Goebbels. Mastermind of the Third Reich* (London, 1996), pages 421–3.

> homeland has been mobilised. Everybody down to the last man and woman is being called to serve your battle's needs.
>
> Our youth are manning the anti-aircraft defences around Germany's cities and workplaces. More and more divisions are on their way.
>
> Weapons unique and hitherto unknown are on the way to your front. . . This is why I have flown to you, to exhaust every means of alleviating your defensive battle and to convert it into ultimate victory. If every one of you will help, we shall once again succeed, with the Almighty's aid.

By this time Russian tanks were approaching; there was nothing between them and Zaporozh'ye; Hitler valued his person too highly to stay too long. He mentioned that he had ordered General Guderian to meet him soon at Vinnitsa – he had given in to Schmundt's badgering and decided to make the truculent general his Inspector of Panzer Troops.

Richthofen recommended that Hitler immediately fly out there for a couple of days and return to Zaporozh'ye if the Russian threat was thwarted.

It was a diplomatic solution. With the gunfire of Russian tanks already audible from the airfield, Hitler took off for the Vinnitsa headquarters 'Werewolf' immediately.

Under Field Marshal von Manstein's able command the First and Fourth panzer armies struck northward on February 22; they soon threw a bridgehead across the Donets at Balakleya.

A new battle for Kharkov was about to begin. The Führer's confidence in Manstein was restored. At last the eastern front was stabilised. Now Hitler could turn his attention to other affairs of state.

ON THE LAST day of February 1943 General Jodl announced at Hitler's war conference that during the night a small British commando unit had mounted a rather odd operation against the hydroelectric power station at Rjukan, in Norway.

The British saboteurs had appeared from nowhere, blown up the 'heavy-water' plant in the basement, and vanished into the surrounding terrain. Always over-apprehensive where Norway was concerned, Hitler took this operation as more than a personal affront.

Both Speer and the scientists of the Kaiser-Wilhelm Institute had advised that atomic explosives could not be manufactured without heavy water. Hitler ordered the plant rebuilt immediately. A few days later however he

learned that it would take at least two years to restore heavy-water production. By that time, reflected Hitler grimly, the war would long be over.



Mourning the death of Heydrich, whom he had seen as his most likely successor, Hitler ordered a commemorative stamp issued (AUTHOR'S COLLECTION)

Silence of the Tomb

Werewolf in winter was a bleak and dreary site. Battle-scarred aircraft stood around the local airfield; impoverished Ukrainian peasants with starving horses trudged the fields collecting wood to warm their wretched hovels. The thaw was turning field and road alike into the now familiar muddy swamps.

Guderian, who had not seen Hitler since December 1941, had found a changed man at Vinnitsa on February 21, 1943. 'His left hand trembled, his back was bent, his gaze was fixed, his eyes protruded but lacked their former lustre, his cheeks were flecked with red. He easily lost his composure, and was prone to angry outbursts and ill-considered decisions in consequence.'

Hitler had contracted a brain inflammation; normally several weeks of rest would have been imperative. He could not afford the time. Soon he was experiencing splitting headaches on one side, and one arm developed a tremor to which he drew Morell's attention; the doctor suspected that it was of hysterical origin, and he noticed Hitler was dragging one leg slightly too. Hitler sat in his badly ventilated quarters, brooding and worrying; his staff expressed concern about his lack of exercise. He was seized by moods of black depression, which Morell tried to combat with injections of Prostakrinum hormones (an extract of young bulls' seminal vesicles and prostate) every other day. As the daily appointment book maintained by his SS orderlies establishes, from now on Morell was nearly always the first visitor to Hitler after his private staff had awakened him each morning.

Stalingrad had left deep scars within him. Outwardly he was callous, ordering a new Sixth Army created forthwith and obliterating all trace of the old. A momentary problem was raised by the letters the survivors were now writing from Soviet captivity. Hitler ordered them destroyed: Why rouse false hopes among their families?

Even deeper were the scars that Stalingrad had left within the Axis itself – symbolised at their ugliest by the hand grenade tossed at a German panzer general as he drove past a surly column of Italian troops marching back from the southern sector of the eastern front. Hitler learned to stifle his anger at these fitful friends. 'I never want to see another soldier of our allies on the eastern front,' he growled in private to Goebbels. 'We can only finish off the Bolsheviks with our own soldiers – and particularly the SS.' When Mussolini offered another seven hundred thousand men, Hitler disdainfully commented to his staff that there was no point in equipping them with scarce German arms which they would surrender at the first opportunity. 'They can't even be assigned "defensive" combat duties.'

Yet when he learned in February that the bedraggled remnants of the Hungarian, Romanian, and Italian armies were being reviled, and that the Italian ambassador had complained that German units had refused any succour to the unarmed, dispirited, and hungry retreating troops, Hitler piously reminded his generals of the need for common decency and camaraderie. In an internal policy conference with Keitel and court historian Scherff on May 31, he ruled against any overall communiqué on the Stalingrad operation, explaining that it could not be depicted without passing judgement on their Allies. Hitler's respect for the Romanian contingent was less affected by their defeat; but on January 22 Germany had invited both Hungary and Italy to withdraw their armies from the eastern front.

Hungary had, it must be said, suffered the bloodiest casualties, for her army was less than four years old; 80,000 Hungarian soldiers were dead or missing since the January 12 offensive, and another 63,000 had been injured. Although Horthy's generals remained largely loyal to the Axis, his diplomats were more devious. The Second Army's commander, General von Jány, rebuked his men with a famous document (of which Himmler's agents later obtained a photocopy), beginning: 'The Hungarian Second Army has lost its honour, for only a few men did the duty that was expected of them under their oath.' But decoded radio messages established beyond doubt that the Hungarian prime minister, Miklas von Kállay had eagerly grasped at Churchill's bumbling proposal to the Turkish government for a new Balkan League (consisting of Turkey, Hungary, and Romania) aligned against both the Soviet Union and the Axis powers. Himmler's agents obtained word of Kállay's recent secret speech to the foreign policy committee of his Parliament, and this speech proved that he was not to be trusted. Hitler decided to bring pressure on Horthy to rid himself of Kállay.

So effective was the smokescreen of spurious Intelligence being laid down before the Abwehr that Hitler had only his intuition to rely on in guessing where the war in the Mediterranean would turn next.

Spain and Portugal seemed particularly vulnerable targets; their occupation would prevent Hitler from seizing Gibraltar, impede his U-boat offensive in the Atlantic, and deprive him of the Iberian peninsula's iron, tungsten, lithium, and tin. Canaris was twice sent to Madrid but reported unenthusiastically. Spain, he said, neither could nor would voluntarily enter the war unless her neutrality were directly threatened. Hitler decided to furnish Franco with the weapons he would need.

By February it seemed clear that the British and Americans were massing strength near the border of Spanish Morocco, even at the expense of their front in Tunisia. Canaris went to Hitler's headquarters on the ninth and tried to kill these rumours, but Hitler ordered divisions in France moved up to the northern Spanish frontier. The next day a naval officer wrote after attending a conference with Hitler: 'As to Spain's attitude, the Führer's mind was suddenly completely at ease. He had certain information, I don't know where from. At any rate he said everything had been cleared up to our satisfaction.' One of the war's most secret treaties had just been signed in Madrid: in return for a supply of modern German weapons, Franco now committed his country to fighting the British and Americans the moment they set foot in Spain, Portugal, or any Spanish possessions in the Mediterranean, Atlantic, and Africa.

THE ENEMY might equally hope to exploit the partisan chaos in the Balkans; an Allied invasion there would bring the Romanian oil fields within bomber range. Hitler directed his military commander in the south-east, General Alexander Löhr, to restore peace there – establishing 'the silence of the tomb, if need be.' In Croatia, as elsewhere, Italy was at the root of Hitler's troubles. Soon the vital bauxite mines of Mostar were abandoned to the partisans. Their leader, Josip Tito, escaped time after time, until Hitler came to extend to him an admiration that he had previously reserved for Stalin.

When Tito's partisan forces had become too powerful, the Italians had merely ignored Germany's protests and abandoned territory wholesale. General Roatta's Second Army had continued to arm the Četnik (Serbian) irregulars against the partisans; in December Ciano had unenthusiastically agreed to Hitler's demand the Četniks be disarmed, but the army had ignored Mussolini's directive to that effect. Late in February, Hitler sent

Ribbentrop to Rome with a strongly worded letter demanding more active Italian support against the Četniks; he furnished dozens of radio messages decoded by his agencies, proving that the Četniks were fighting for London. The new Italian Chief of Staff, General Ambrosio, furnished various excuses for not proceeding against them. Löhr came to Vinnitsa and proposed pacifying Croatia by installing at every level a German civil administration. Hitler's patience with the Italians was exhausted; he ordered Mostar and the bauxite mines recaptured, and he began planning a sharp war of annihilation against the Četniks. 'On account of the intimate relations between the Četnik commanders and the Italian authorities,' the conference record stated, 'the Führer attaches particular importance to camouflaging our object and all the preparations.' This operation, code-named 'Black,' would begin in mid-May 1943.

If it were not for the political effect on Italy, Hitler would have long since withdrawn his divisions from Tunisia. His own interest in this distant theatre of war was negligible. 'Without optimism, military command is impossible,' Hitler later meditated. 'I see Rommel – though he has his limitations – as an extraordinarily bold and clever commander, but he lacks staying power; everybody thinks so.'

Warlimont returned from Tunis in mid-February quoting Rommel's description of the bridgehead as a 'house of cards' which would collapse the moment Montgomery attacked – presumably one month hence, when the moon was full. Ominously, the Allies had a 57-millimetre shell seemingly capable of piercing the Tiger tanks, pride of Hitler's armour. General von Arnim's Fifth Panzer Army detected a weak spot facing them, however, the U.S. Second Corps; on February 14 General Ziegler struck at these inexperienced soldiers and drove a big salient toward the vital Kasserine Pass, taking hundreds of American prisoners. Starved of gasoline, even this German offensive failed. Canaris, visiting the bridgehead, quoted Arnim as saying, 'With the supply position as it is' – twenty-five thousand tons instead of the requisite eighty thousand tons had arrived in February – 'you can work out with pencil and paper when the end will come.'

Characteristically, Rommel fell sick. A specialist confirmed to Hitler that he would have to go on leave by February 20 at the latest; mysteriously, the moment he was given command of the army group, with one German and one Italian army to defend Tunis, his illness cleared up. Rommel soon lost heart again when he saw Montgomery's preparations to attack his Mareth Line in the south. On March 4 Hitler was handed Rommel's discouraging

opinion: the present Tunis battlefront was over 400 miles long, the enemy had 1,600 tanks, 1,100 antitank guns, and about 210,000 combat troops; unless Hitler would authorise Rommel to withdraw to a far shorter front, the two armies would be overwhelmed. Not without justification Hitler noted: 'That is a complete contradiction of his earlier contention' – namely that a retreat to Tunisia would solve their strategic shortcomings.

Jodl pointed out that Rommel's plan would make a gift of vital airfields to the enemy and allow the British generals Montgomery and Alexander to join forces against the bridgehead.

Hitler refused to allow the withdrawal. 'This is the end,' he predicted nonetheless. 'They might just as well be brought back.' 'On superior orders,' as Rommel querulously wrote, he launched his last attack on March 6, on Montgomery. But that same day he pulled back to the Mareth Line. As Hitler had predicted, it was the end. From all appearances – as arranged by the British secret service – captured Italian officers had betrayed Rommel's plans, so Hitler did not reproach him. (In fact the British had once again decyphered all Rommel's signals.) Hitler decided on the eighth to bring home Rommel before he could be tarnished by the inevitable defeat in Tunis; the recall remained a closely guarded secret – the *reputation* of Rommel would soldier on *in absentia*.

A letter came from Mussolini, dated March 9, confirming that the Axis must enlarge its bridgehead in Tunisia, and not reduce it as Rommel wished, 'Because that would end with us beaten and with our backs to the sea.'

Hitler agreed, and signalled to Rommel: 'The withdrawal of both your armies into a narrow bridgehead around Tunis and Biserta is the beginning of the end.' They must double, and even treble, their shipments into the bridgehead. Hoping to persuade him against this, Rommel flew into Vinnitsa late that day, March 9, and spent the evening alone with Hitler.

The Führer turned a deaf ear on his pleas to shorten the front line. He betrayed an obvious conviction that the field marshal had become a defeatist. He intended, he said, to increase the supply rate to 150,000 tons a month. When Rommel's health improved, he should return to Africa and direct a new offensive westward to Casablanca. He dictated these lines to Mussolini: 'For the time being I have given the field marshal leave of absence to restore his health. This is urgently necessary both in the judgement of the doctors and on the evidence of my own eyes. . . I must ask you at all costs to keep Rommel's absence on leave absolutely secret. Whatever posterity may judge of Field Marshal Rommel, to his troops, and particularly

to the German soldiers, he was beloved in every command he held. He was always dreaded as an opponent by his enemies. . .'

It seemed that Field Marshal Rommel was now a figure of the past.

ON MARCH 1, 1943, hundreds of British night bombers rained high explosives and incendiaries on Berlin, leaving thirty-five thousand people homeless and over seven hundred dead. A low-level Luftwaffe fighter-bomber attack ordered as a reprisal against London on March 5 had to be scrubbed, as Hitler was apologetically told, because of fog and the 'dead calm sea' – evoking from Hitler the astonished query: 'Do our planes *swim* over, then?' Hitler blamed the indolent and sybaritic Field Marshal Sperrle, commander of the Third Air Force, and called for a younger man to direct the attack.

Göring was on an art purchasing expedition in Italy. 'When does the Reichsmarschall get back?' Hitler demanded. 'Things can't go on like this; we will never wear down the British like this.' When Goebbels arrived on March 8 with Speer, Hitler was still furiously inveighing against the complete failure of the Luftwaffe. Toward midnight, sitting with these visitors in his bunker, Hitler was just remarking sarcastically that he only had to picture his generals in mufti to lose every shred of respect for them when he heard that the British had just launched a colossal air raid against Nuremberg – the mediæval gem of architecture, and seat of the Party's affairs.

Hitler had Göring's liaison officer, Bodenschatz, roused, and rasped that the Reichsmarschall must return from Rome forthwith. 'The generals always knew better than I,' he told Goebbels. 'Now the German public is paying the price.' Göring arrived on the eleventh – 'I told the Führer I am not an aircraft designer or technician,' he said a week later. 'So I can't build the planes myself, nor can I develop new engines or equipment.' His generals and experts had always bluffed him; his radar specialists had even excused their inability to test blind-bombing devices by pleading bad weather.

Over the next nights Munich and Stuttgart were the bombers' targets. Overriding Göring, Hitler ordered the air war against Britain stepped up, and he appointed the youthful Colonel Dietrich Peltz 'Attack Commander, England' – responsible not to the sluggish Sperrle but to the chief of air staff Jeschonnek (and hence to Hitler) alone.

Putting these aggravations momentarily behind him, Hitler flew back out for the morning of March 10 to Manstein's headquarters at Zaporozh'ye in Russia; he was well satisfied with events on the southern front. Manstein's two panzer armies had left 23,000 Russian dead on the battlefield between

the Donets and Dnieper rivers; 615 tanks and 354 guns had fallen into his hands. Thereupon, an offensive against Stalin's Voronezh army group had resulted in the destruction of the enemy's Third Tank Army south-west of Kharkov, killing 12,000 Russians. Now Manstein's Fourth Panzer Army, with its powerful SS panzer corps, was embarking upon the fifth battle fought over Kharkov.

> The Führer lands at 10:40 A.M. [noted the Luftwaffe's Field Marshal von Richthofen]. Manstein and I drive in Führer's car to army group HQ. . . The Führer discusses the coming operations. . . Manstein keeps up his hate-fest against Kleist [commander of Army Group A] the whole time, and Führer prompts Manstein to make hostile comments about Kleist and Kluge, his two neighbours.
>
> Führer enjoying every minute. Ribs me mercilessly but kindly; for some reason addresses everybody as 'Herr Feldmarschall' today as a joke. . . Says he never wants to hear of the Romanians or our other gallant allies again.

The snows were melting, turning the eastern front into its seasonal morass. The three-hundred-mile nightmare breach had almost been stitched together, proof in Hitler's eyes that the Red Army had no reserves up its sleeve after all. Already the Russians were drafting their seventeen-year-olds; perhaps the great collapse was in sight at last. In the south the recapture of Kharkov was now certain. And west of Moscow 'Operation Buffalo' was drawing to its brilliant conclusion. The Red Army, puzzled at this uncharacteristic retreat, had followed only hesitantly, stumbled upon well-laid minefields and booby-traps, and suffered heavy casualties at no cost to the Germans. The retiring Germans had destroyed or dismantled everything of value to the enemy. 'A battle won,' concluded Kluge's army group.

On March 13, Hitler flew back to the Wolf's Lair in Rastenburg, East Prussia, calling first that afternoon at Smolensk, headquarters for Kluge's Army Group Centre. Three days before, on March 10, Himmler had telephoned to Hitler's police bodyguard a warning to be on the lookout for parcel bombs. Hitler showed no concern. He was inspired by the buoyant mood of Kluge's officers at Smolensk. They were delighted at the tactical victory of the Fourth and Ninth armies in 'Operation Buffalo.' The new 'Buffalo' line was already built – a formidable line of barbed wire entanglements, bunkers, and antitank ditches. When Kluge asked if the objective of

their coming summer campaign could be disclosed to them, Hitler astonished both Kluge and his staff with its modesty: 'To hold the eastern front just as it is.' That evening he was back in East Prussia, at the Wolf's Lair.*

The prospect of a year on the defensive galled him. 'I can't just let a whole year go to waste,' he said. Zeitzler agreed; the new East Wall was all very well, but, he said, 'they will flatten us before we can finish it.' Hitler responded, 'They are in such a state now that we would be lunatics not to exploit it.' The fragmentary records of his war conferences reveal him already plotting with Zeitzler a partial resumption of the offensive in order to regain the initiative in the central front. Zeitzler hinted at April 15 as a suitable date. 'One thing we must *not* say,' insisted the Führer, 'is – this year just a few prods at the enemy, next year the Big Push. Perhaps *this* year we can win the war!' Before March 13 was over Hitler had signed Zeitzler's order laying the foundations of 'Citadel,' a combined attack by Kluge's and Manstein's army groups on a tempting enemy salient at Kursk.

The next day Sepp Dietrich's SS troops retook Kharkov. Hitler exuberantly telephoned Goebbels, but the canny propaganda minister was against any special radio fanfare – it would undermine the very 'Dunkirk spirit' he had laboured to contrive in Germany.

That evening Goebbels telephoned back, appealing to be allowed to revive the anti-Jewish propaganda motif and badgering Hitler to complete evicting the Jews from the Reich as soon as possible. Hitler indulgently agreed, but when Himmler himself arrived at the Wolf's Lair on the seventeenth, the Führer apparently felt it necessary to speak a word of restraint, for the next day Himmler telephoned to Gestapo Chief Heinrich Müller in Berlin that there was to be 'no deportation of privileged Jews' from France.

HITLER'S CHRONIC ailment, his stomach spasms, had begun to recur. Professor Morell advised him to retire for a week or two to the Obersalzberg.

* In fact Kluge's Abwehr officer, Colonel Rudolf von Gersdorff, and others claimed after the war that they planted a parcel bomb in Hitler's aircraft before it left Smolensk on March 13, 1943. Admiral Canaris, one of the plotters, wrote in his own notes of the flight he made to Smolensk on March 8: 'I conveyed time fuses and explosives in my plane to the Army Group's Abwehr II sabotage unit.' Since Canaris dined for two hours with Himmler on March 10, it is tempting to assume that Canaris made an incautious remark to him about the bomb plot; but Himmler's files show that since March 3 parcel bombs posted by the Polish underground were causing some concern.

With the eastern front now paralysed by the thaw, Hitler bowed to their advice; besides, at the Berghof he would be closer to the Mediterranean theatre. Admiral Canaris had twice warned that the enemy would occupy Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica. It seemed high time for Hitler to meet the Duce. Thus Hitler left the Wolf's Lair, though his absence would last for many weeks longer than he originally planned.

Surrounded by his staff, he dined in the train's restaurant car with its red-leather-covered chairs. The three secretaries joined him – Johanna Wolf, Christa Schroeder, and Traudl Humps, the newcomer. Schaub, Hewel, Bormann, and Morell sat in as well – the portly doctor wading into the meal with an appetite that was as audible as it was evident. Hitler contented himself with mashed potato, an egg, and a dry biscuit. Traudl Humps later wrote: 'I was taken aback by the informal nature of the conversation. Bormann above all was gentle and friendly. . . The Führer spoke softly and with restraint. After the meal he asked for the ceiling lights to be switched off. He preferred subdued light as his eyes were rather sensitive.' A pot of caraway-seed tea was served. 'Delicious,' exclaimed Hitler, but nobody accepted his offer of a cup. At intervals the train halted, and telephone messages were received. Hitler summoned a manservant: 'Take Blondi for a walk outside.' Then the train began again, the dining car gently swaying, Morell snoring lightly, and the one small table lamp casting a dim glow.

At Rügenwalde in Pomerania the next morning he dallied for a few hours to inspect Krupp's new giant gun, 'Long Gustav,' and various new tank prototypes undergoing trials on the ranges. Here at last was the new Ferdinand tank, a seventy-ton monster powered by two diesel-electric engines, all but impregnable with its eight-inch-thick armourplate and formidable 88-millimetre gun. These and the Tigers would surely overwhelm the Russians when 'Citadel' began.

Hitler was undismayed by the prevalent fear of Russian 'armies' that were in fact a mere shadow of their name. 'I am convinced the rogues are so weak. . .' the stenographers heard him say; and, 'All they have against us are "formations," but. . .' (The fragments alone exist, but they seem clear enough.) He invited Speer and Goebbels to dinner in the Berlin chancellery and mentioned the high hopes he vested in the U-boat war.

Goebbels recommended that the Luftwaffe bomb London's 'plutocratic' districts rather than the working-class slums. When he channelled the conversation around to the Jews, Hitler congratulated him on having kicked most of them out of Berlin. 'The war is enabling us to tackle a whole series

of problems we could never have dealt with in normal times,' Goebbels quoted him as saying.

Half an hour after midnight on March 22 his train left Berlin, heading south. In Munich Eva Braun joined it for the short journey onward to Berchtesgaden. Hitler's health was still indifferent, but he had begun taking handfuls of 'Dr. Koester's Antigas Tablets,' a patent medicine which had brought relief seven years earlier.

Two days after Hitler, Professor Morell arrived at the Obersalzberg: 'There are Föhn [warm mountain wind] conditions,' he noted, 'and a sudden heat wave.' Hitler sent for him at nine-thirty, after the war conference. 'Complained of violent headache and a throbbing head. Temporal artery badly swollen. Looking generally tired and languid.' He found Hitler's blood pressure up and injected an iodine compound, reflecting that his patient had been living in low-pressure areas since mid-November – 'And now this sudden change. Moreover, up to a week or ten days ago he's been worrying constantly about the consolidation of the eastern front. During the actual injections,' recorded Morell, 'his head began to clear and a short time later the throbbing stopped. Sat up in animated conversation until two-thirty A.M. at the fireside (but no fire!), and I made sure he got fresh air.'

FEW RECORDS of his military conferences of the following weeks exist. Apart from 'Citadel,' we know that Hitler was looking ahead to a further offensive against Leningrad in the summer. He was also casting around for some way of regaining the initiative in the west: 'Gisela,' a Nazi occupation of northern Spain, was one; but he had begun to reconsider a lightning invasion of Iceland too – 'Operation Ikarus,' which Raeder had barely talked him out of in 1940. Mussolini was not due to come until April 7; before then Hitler had only a little-publicised meeting with King Boris, one of his trustier allies; it was so informal that at one stage one of Hitler's secretaries made an unheralded appearance munching an apple and clutching a pair of tennis rackets. 'Don't worry yourself,' Hitler consoled her afterward, 'even kings are only human.'

In these weeks at the Berghof, Hitler looked briefly into some Third Reich problems he had too long ignored. Others he avoided. Thus when Reichsführer Himmler came on March 30 the discussion revolved solely around the military affairs of the SS, according to Himmler's note.

Himmler did not raise with Hitler the progress made on the 'Jewish Problem' during their two-hour mountain stroll. Earlier in 1943 Himmler

had submitted to him a statistical report on a similar topic – the population transfers he had sponsored since October 1939: in three years Himmler had resettled 629,000 ethnic Germans from outside the Reich; 400,000 more were still to come. In the same period 365,000 Poles were dumped in the Generalgouvernement of Poland, and 295,000 French citizens were evicted from Alsace, Lorraine, and Luxembourg.

Did Hitler ever see the other statistical report that the Reichsführer had commissioned at the same time, on the 'Final Solution of the Jewish Problem in Europe'? In dry tables, Himmler's chief statistician, Dr. Richard Korherr, had analysed the fate of the world's estimated 17,000,000 Jews: Europe's 10,000,000 had dwindled by 45 percent since 1937, owing to emigration, the high natural mortality rate, and the enforced 'evacuation' that had begun with the prohibition of emigration late in 1941. To Himmler's annoyance, on reading the sixteen-page document on March 27 he found that it stated *expressis verbis* on page 9 that of the 1,449,692 Jews deported from the eastern provinces 1,274,166 had been subjected to 'special treatment' at camps in the Generalgouvernement and a further 145,301 similarly dealt with in the Warthegau. (Dr. Korherr, it should be said, still denies that the words meant 'liquidated.') On April 1 Himmler had the report abridged 'for submission to the Führer'; and a few days later he instructed that he 'did not want there to be any mention of "special treatment of Jews" whatever.' According to the new text, the Jews would have been 'channelled through' the camps to Russia – not 'subjected to special treatment' *at* the camps. As Himmler explained to his staff on April 9, the report would serve magnificently for 'camouflage purposes' in later years.

Mussolini arrived at Salzburg station on April 7. The Italians were housed at Klessheim – an enchanting baroque chateau near Salzburg which had been lavishly restored – and here a short series of what Zeitzler contemptuously dubbed 'gala war conferences' was held for Mussolini's benefit. Hitler did what he could to inspire Mussolini with the coming campaigns in the east, but the two dictators were moved by different purposes. Mussolini still wanted an armistice with Stalin, to enable the Axis to throw all its might against Britain and the United States, and he handed to Hitler a memorandum on the possible negotiations: given the Allies' poor showing over the Russian convoys and a Second Front, he said, Stalin had good cause to be disaffected. The Duce believed that Spain would voluntarily join the Axis. To Hitler all this was disappointingly naïve. If Fascism in Italy was not to be

overthrown, so he advised Mussolini, they must hold on to Tunis at all costs. This meant that the Italian navy must throw every fast cruiser and destroyer it had into the supply operations for Tunisia. The Duce asked for more oil for the ships, and Hitler agreed to supply it.

EACH EVENING he was driven back up to the Berghof, where he was greeted by the barking of Eva Braun's two untidy black Scotties and by Eva herself, elegantly clad in the latest fashions. That spring, she organised regular film shows for his staff in the basement bowling-alley, but Hitler piously stayed away. 'In wartime, with the people called upon to make such sacrifices, I cannot watch movies. Besides,' he added, 'I must save my eyesight for reading maps and dispatches.' The same priggish considerations militated against his wearing more comfortable clothes. A Churchill, he noted, might gambol about the world dressed in silk blouses and cowboy hats – but not the Führer of the German Reich. 'But the moment the war is over,' he said, 'I am going to hang my uniform on a nail, retire here, and let somebody else take over the government. As an old man I shall write my memoirs, surrounded by clever, intellectual people – I never want to see another officer.'

They were long evenings that spring, for Hitler refused to go to bed until the last enemy bomber had left Germany's airspace. In March alone eight thousand tons of bombs had rained down on Germany, sometimes a thousand tons a night on single cities like Duisburg, Essen, and Berlin.

On April 4, American air raids killed 228 civilians in Paris and 221 in Naples; on the fifth an American raid on the Belgian port of Antwerp massacred 2,130 civilians. Hitler's interest in the army's long-range missile project increased, and on March 29 he had already approved Speer's blueprints for a huge concrete missile site on the Channel coast, from which Britain would be bombarded once missiles were available.

As Göring's prestige declined, the rivalry of the other satraps increased. Speer was an almost permanent visitor to the Berghof throughout April, Goebbels came and went, but Bormann was lord of the manor here.

He had secured Hitler's signature to a document appointing him his official 'Secretary': he had the right to 'communicate the Führer's decisions and opinions to the Reich ministers and other departments and agencies' – a formidable prerogative. He alone now decided which non-military supplicants might see Hitler and which documents would be shown to him.

Bormann's powers became vast. His eyes were everywhere; his energy was prodigious; his loyalty beyond question.

Clutching at Straws

By the spring of 1943 the Axis alliance was a myth, and Hitler knew it. From the decoded messages shown to him it was clear that both the Hungarian and Romanian governments had emissaries in neutral capitals who were sounding the western enemy on the prospects of peace. Finland was searching for a way out of the war; Sweden, for a way into it – on the Allied side. Hitler, who had just personally instructed his new envoy to Stockholm that his sole purpose must be to keep Sweden neutral, now contemplated more drastic measures: after one Berghof conference he detained Jodl and a handful of trusted advisers and instructed them to draft outline plans for a lightning invasion of Sweden should need arise.

Romania's Marshal Antonescu, invited to the Berghof on April 12, accepted Hitler's reproaches with a fatalistic air. When Hitler read the Forschungsamt records of incriminating telephone conversations proving the disloyalty of Romanian ministers – and their clandestine negotiations with the enemy – the marshal made a convincing display of indignation.

Hitler gave the Hungarian regent a rather rougher ride when he came four days later. Horthy supported his Prime Minister Kállay to the hilt and denied that Hungary was in contact with the enemy. 'We are all in the same boat,' Hitler warned. 'If anybody jumps ship now – he drowns.'

Nor was the language very delicate that he and Ribbentrop used to prod Horthy into taking a sterner line over the 800,000 Hungarian Jews. For months Germany had pressed for them to be turned over to the appropriate German agencies for deportation to 'reservations in the east,' arguing that they were potential rumourmongers, purveyors of defeatism, saboteurs, agents of the enemy secret service, and contact men for an 'international Jewry' now embattled against Germany. On April 16 the interpreter recorded Ribbentrop as advising Horthy that he would have to confine his

Jews to concentration camps if he were not to liquidate them: there was no third way. Germany was today standing, with her morale firm, echoed Hitler, because she had removed the Jews; those still remaining would soon also have 'vanished to the East.' He did not mind being excoriated for his Jewish policies, if these brought him tranquillity. The enemy Jews, he reminded Horthy, were behind the bombing deaths of countless women and children in Germany. Horthy apologised that he had done all he decently could against the Jews: 'But one can't very well murder them or bump them off somehow,' he protested. Hitler retorted: 'There is no need for that, either.' Just as in Slovakia, however, they must be isolated in remote camps where they could not infect healthy society. As for the talk of murdering Jews, Hitler pointed out: 'Only one person murders – the Jew who starts wars and by his influence gives them their anti-civilian, anti-woman, and anti-children character.' The Jews could be put to work in the mines; Ribbentrop agreed – they could not be allowed to run around 'scot-free'.

Since Horthy seemed unconvinced, on the seventeenth Hitler stepped up the rhetoric: Poland, he said, should have been an object lesson. He related to Horthy how Polish Jews who refused to work were shot or just wasted away. Using his favourite analogy, he argued that Jews must be treated like tuberculosis bacilli. 'That was not cruel, if one remembered that even innocent creatures like hares and deer had to be killed so that no harm was caused. Why should one spare the beasts who wanted to bring us Bolshevism? Nations that did not fight off the Jews went to rack and ruin.'

In Hitler's warning to Horthy that the 'Jewish Bolsheviks' would liquidate all Europe's intelligentsia, we can identify the influence of a propaganda windfall about which Goebbels had just telephoned him. Strange frozen mounds had been pointed out to German soldiers in the Katyn forest, near Smolensk, in February; by March 1943 they had thawed, and had been opened to reveal the remains of twelve thousand Polish army officers. The diaries and letters found on the corpses were last dated April 1940 – when the region was in Russian hands. They had all been shot expertly in the nape of the neck. Hitler approved Goebbels's suggestion that Katyn should be linked in the public's mind with the Jewish question.

Nor was Hitler minded to treat even the non-Jewish of Stalin's peoples with kid gloves. Throughout the spring of 1943 a squabble raged between Alfred Rosenberg, the endlessly verbose minister for the eastern territories, and Gauleiter Erich Koch, Reich Commissar in the Ukraine. Rosen-

berg – supported by Ribbentrop, Zeitzler, and Goebbels – wanted to win the subject peoples' support in the fight against Stalin, and he complained that Koch's brutal methods and pasha lifestyle were incompatible with this. At Christmas he had sent a special plane to Rostov to collect two hundred pounds of caviar. Yet Hitler, Bormann, and – more circumspectly – Himmler, defended Koch. Rosenberg might theorise about the future cultural life of the Ukraine, but Koch's harsh duty was to squeeze every ton of grain and every slave labourer he could out of the region. The idea of harnessing Russians voluntarily to the war against Stalin was a chimera, said Hitler. 'I have always felt there are only a handful of men who can really keep their heads in a major crisis, without being waylaid by some phantom hope or other. The saying that drowning men clutch at straws is only too true.'

When Ribbentrop identified himself with General Vlasov's idea for a Russian army of liberation, Hitler rapped his knuckles. 'There will be no such political operations. They will only result in our people fraternising with the Russians.' Field Marshals Kluge and Küchler were also rebuffed when they supported the Vlasov project. Millions of leaflets dropped over enemy lines announced that the Wehrmacht was fighting only Stalin and not the Russian people, and they spoke of a 'National Committee' in Smolensk as though it were the Russian government being groomed for the post-Stalin era. To Hitler this idea was madness; as he angrily told Zeitzler, to let the Ukrainians set up their own government would be tantamount to throwing away the Nazis' entire war aim. The Russians would start off as a satellite state such as Poland had been in World War I, and Germany would end up confronting an entirely independent state all over again.

On May 19 Hitler brought Rosenberg and Koch face to face. Rosenberg firmly repeated that Koch's policies were supplying the enemy with thousands of partisans. Koch justified his methods. Hitler adjudged that both were right, though Koch was righter. As for the partisan argument, if Rosenberg were right, there would be fewest partisans where the 'particularly crafty generals' spoke in the most honeyed tones; this was not the case. Nor could slave labour be procured except by Koch's methods. 'Only feebleminded generals imagine we can win any manpower by blandishments.' As for Koch's executions in the Ukraine, challenged Hitler: 'How many of our compatriots are losing their lives in air raids here at home?'

Hitler laid down that in the future neither Koch nor Rosenberg was to employ foreigners as advisers. 'If they work *against* their own country, they are devoid of character. If they work *for* it, they are useless as advisers to us.'

The military aspects of the Vlasov 'Russian army' project were analysed in a heated session between Hitler, Keitel, and Zeitzler some weeks later. Hitler did not object to employing Russian volunteers in non-combatant duties. But he would not approve of the Vlasov project beyond its propaganda value. Vlasov himself would be needed only for his photograph on the leaflets. Keitel accordingly ruled that no 'National Committee' was to be set up; the Führer would permit Vlasov's leaflets only on condition that German agencies realised that nobody must take them seriously.

HITLER HAD given his General Staff a free hand in devising a plan for 'Citadel.' A modest victory in Russia would inspire neutrals and half-hearted allies alike; it would stabilise the front for the rest of 1943, long enough for him to release armoured divisions to thwart any enemy molestation of Italy or the Balkans; in addition, the home economy badly needed the slave labour that 'Citadel' would harvest in its wake. Zeitzler's final proposal was that the objective, an enemy salient near Kursk, should be excised in a classic pincer attack by the Ninth Army from the north and the Fourth Panzer Army from the south, their spearheads meeting just east of Kursk. Zeitzler drafted a pompously worded operational order ('The victory at Kursk must shine as a beacon to the whole world') and Hitler signed it on April 15. It made grim provision for the rounding up and smooth westward dispatch of the hundreds of thousands of able-bodied Russians expected to fall into the German net. 'Citadel' was set to begin on the third of May.

Once this much had been settled, Zeitzler flew back to his headquarters in East Prussia, but a few days later he received a telephone call from Hitler: the Führer had thought 'Citadel' over and now felt it would be better to abandon the idea of a pincer attack – which was so obvious that the enemy would be certain to be ready and waiting for it – and instead combine the assault forces of Army Groups South and Centre in one frontal thrust, thus splitting the enemy's massed strength in two. Zeitzler would not hear of it, saying that redeploying the two armies would inflict a crippling delay; he made a special flight to Berchtesgaden on April 21 to prove it. Hitler yielded. Zeitzler had proved right at Stalingrad; while his own sureness of touch, his strategic instinct, had failed him then.

General Model, commander of the Ninth Army, had originally asked for two days to punch through the Russian defences, but late in April he raised this estimate to three days. Kluge pointed out that with 227 tanks and 120 assault guns the Ninth Army was stronger than ever before, but Model

claimed he still needed 100 more tanks. Zeitzler agreed to rush 50 from the west, with 20 more Tigers and 40 assault guns. But the 'three-day' estimate worried Hitler: three days of uninterrupted battle against an experienced enemy would result in the massacre of the assault troops. 'When Model told me before "Citadel" that he'd need three days,' Hitler said a year later, '– that's when I got cold feet.' He asked Model to fly to the Berghof. On April 27 the wiry, dark-haired general was standing before him in the Great Hall; his aerial photographs appeared to confirm the claim that twelve-mile-deep Russian fortifications had to be overcome before the Ninth Army could advance on Kursk. Hitler postponed the start of 'Citadel' to May 5. On April 29 he ordered a further postponement to the ninth, to give the armies a few more days to stockpile tanks and guns.

Out of 'a few more days' grew weeks, then months. General Guderian, who began attending the war conferences on May 2 in his capacity as Inspector of Panzer Troops, gave Hitler his own impression of increased tank availability if 'Citadel' could be delayed long enough. At present, he said, the Tiger was plagued by gear and steering faults, and the advanced Panther tank's production had repeatedly broken down. But Guderian assured Hitler that during May two battalions of each of the different tank types – Panthers, Ferdinands, Tigers, and Hornets – would be activated; the existing tanks on the front would be reinforced with armoured 'aprons' against anti-tank shells; in addition, tank output itself was increasing: 939 tanks in April, 1,140 in May, 1,005 in June, and 1,071 in July. In short, suggested Guderian, it was well worth holding up 'Citadel' for a bit. Hitler – his own mind already made up for an even longer postponement – summoned his leading generals to Munich for a three-hour conference on May 4. Jeschonnek rendered a contemporary description to Richthofen, which threw a piquant sidelight on the personalities around the Führer:

> [On April 27] General Model declared he was not strong enough and would probably get bogged down or take too long. The Führer took the view that the attack must be punched through without fail in shortest time possible. [Early in May] General Guderian offered to furnish enough tank units within six weeks to guarantee this. The Führer thus decided on a postponement of six weeks.
>
> To get the blessing of all sides on this decision, he called a conference [on May 4] with Field Marshals von Kluge and von Manstein. At first they agreed on a postponement; but when they heard that the Führer

> had already made his mind up to that effect, they spoke out for an immediate opening of the attack – apparently in order to avoid the odium of being blamed for the postponement themselves.

Jeschonnek, Richthofen, and Zeitzler all opposed any further delay, arguing that time would operate solely in favour of the Russians. Nonetheless, Hitler now postponed 'Citadel' to mid-June.

ANOTHER FACTOR now bore on his decisions: imminent defeat in Tunisia.

Starved of ammunition, food, and fuel, General von Arnim's quarter of a million troops had fought a stubborn rearguard action in its ever shrinking bridgehead. By the end of April, he had only seventy-six tanks left and was distilling what fuel he could from low-grade wines and liquors. Hitler dispatched General Warlimont to Rome to renew pressure on the quivering Italian navy. 'The only moral act is to fight and win this war,' he was to tell the Italians. 'What is immoral is to lose, and then scuttle your ships without having fought.' The appeal availed Hitler naught – the Italian navy stayed in harbour. On May 6, overcoming Arnim's defence of the mountain passes, the British First Army broke through to Tunis. Two days later however Keitel wrote: 'The Führer and Duce are determined to continue the fight in Tunisia as long as possible.'

Warlimont returned with comforting news about Mussolini's health and offered his assessment that provided the Duce kept a tight rein on events, the coming loss of Tunis need not spell disaster within Italy. Hitler was not so sure. 'The Duce and the Fascist party are resolved to stand by Germany through thick and thin,' he told his staff at noon. However 'a section of the officer corps – more at the top, fewer lower down – is inclined to make peace already. Certain influential circles are capable of treachery.'

He asked Field Marshal Rommel to return from his convalescent leave to see him.

ON MAY 6 Hitler turned his back on the Mediterranean and returned by train to Berlin. Viktor Lutze, who had succeeded Röhm as SA Chief of Staff nine years earlier, had just died in an autobahn accident, and Hitler intended to participate in the next day's state funeral.

It was a good funeral. Afterward he addressed the gauleiters on the meaning of the present war. It had begun, he said, as a fight between bourgeois and revolutionary states, in which the former had been easily overthrown.

Now however they were facing in the east a *Weltanschauung*-state like their own, its Jewish-Bolshevist ideology permeating its army with a zeal and spirit which only his own SS divisions could match. This was why he, Hitler, had decided that 'the Jews must be thrown out of Europe.'

He had come to believe, he continued, that in his great pre-war purges Stalin had not ruined the Red Army after all; quite the contrary. The introduction of political commissars had moreover vastly increased the Soviet army's effectiveness. The Russian solidarity behind Stalin was complete: he had no Church elements to restrain him as Hitler had in Germany. The Führer often feared, he said, that the Herrenvolk could not forever maintain their superiority. Genghis Khan's hordes had penetrated far into the heart of Europe without Germandom having possessed the strength to hold them back. However, Speer's gigantic tank programme would ensure victory in the east, while Dönitz's U-boats kept the Jewish-fostered warmongers of the West at bay. Hitler told the gauleiters that Stalin had lost over thirteen million troops since 'Barbarossa' had started. The summer offensive would be carried forward by dependable German troops alone. Eventually, he promised, Germany would dominate all Europe.

Talking things over with Goebbels that day, May 9, Hitler ruled out any idea of emulating the Japanese practice of putting enemy bomber crews on trial. With hundreds of thousands of his own troops falling into enemy hands now, Hitler had no choice. He was heartily sick of this war now; he yearned to take off his uniform and become a human being once more. He was no less sick of his generals – calling them liars, traitors, and anti-Nazi reactionaries to boot. Goebbels felt that his star was rising.

THOUGH HEADING north again, Hitler had not turned his back on Mussolini. He had never forgotten the Duce's benevolence over Austria in 1938. 'I told him then "I shall never forget you for this!" And I never shall,' Hitler admonished his less forgiving staff. He worried far more that treacherous, royalist generals would play Italy into the enemy's hands.

This was why he had recalled Rommel: Rommel should command Hitler's troops in Italy when the time came.

Rommel flew into Berlin on May 9 and reported to Hitler at one P.M., looking fit and well. Hitler kept the ambitious field marshal on tenterhooks. Rommel wrote in his diary: 'Afterward I attended the war conference. No special job as yet. Field Marshal Keitel hinted at my utilisation in Italy with the Duce if things should turn sticky there.' The next day he recorded: 'I

stressed to both the Führer and Goebbels the meagre fighting quality of the Italians and their reluctance to fight.' On the twelfth Hitler released the news that Rommel had been in Germany since March, when he had awarded him the nation's highest medal.

At six P.M. that evening, Hitler and his staff flew back to his East Prussian headquarters. Perhaps it was a blind, an attempt to deceive the enemy into believing that 'Citadel' was imminent.

He had no fear of an enemy invasion in the west as yet. No, he knew that the Mediterranean was still the most dangerous theatre. On May 8 an adjutant had announced at the war conference a startling Abwehr scoop: the corpse of an Allied officer found floating off the Spanish coast had yielded sealed envelopes bearing ostensibly genuine letters from the British war office and Lord Mountbatten addressed to Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham and General Dwight D. Eisenhower. Two invasion operations were to be mounted, these indicated, one in the western Mediterranean and one in the Peloponnese; these would be covered by dummy invasions of Sicily and the Dodecanese, respectively. Admiral Canaris fell hook, line, and sinker for their contents. Hitler was less gullible, and at the end of the war conference spoke his thoughts out loud to Jodl's staff officer: 'Christian, couldn't this be a corpse they have deliberately played into our hands?'* There was no way of knowing. Both Zeitzler's Intelligence staff and Canaris ruled out the possibility, and for the next month the Peloponnese and Sardinia – presumed to be the target of the real assault in the western Mediterranean – attracted most of Hitler's attention.

Albert Speer and his principal arms barons came to see him at the Wolf's Lair on May 13. Hitler bestowed a rare award, the 'Doctor Todt Ring,' on the munitions minister, for his reorganisation of the armaments industry had yielded amazing results. Germany was turning out six times as much heavy ammunition as in 1941 and three times as many guns. Between February and May heavy tank production had doubled, testifying to the indomitable spirit of the workers despite the air raids.

To Goebbels, Speer commented that the Führer looked worn out with worry. It was the anxiety over Italy. What use indeed were the new weap-

* The conference stenographer, the late Ludwig Krieger – a close aide of the famous Intelligence Chief Colonel Nicolai in World War I – recalled the scene vividly. The corpse was indeed a macabre ploy of the British secret service.

ons that Speer demonstrated within the headquarters compound the next day – the mighty hundred-ton Mouse tank, the new assault guns, and the deadly bazooka (still called *Pusterohr*) – if Italy changed sides, if the enemy landed in the Balkans, and if the Romanian oil fields were reduced to ruins?

The fighting in Tunis was now over. The Afrika Korps' last brave radio emission had arrived signed by its last commander, General Hans Cramer: 'Ammunition spent. Arms and equipment destroyed. The Afrika Korps has fought till it can fight no more, as ordered.' A hundred thousand of Hitler's finest troops were being marched into British and American captivity; some 150,000 Italians had been taken prisoner.

Hitler offered Mussolini five divisions to restore the blood to Italy's anaemic arteries. The Duce's reply, obviously drafted by the devious General Ambrosio – Keitel's counterpart – stated that the three German divisions left as a backlog of the transport movements to Tunisia were quite enough: but he wanted three hundred tanks, fifty anti-aircraft batteries, and hundreds of fighter aircraft.

Admiral Dönitz stated that the Italians expected the British to invade Sicily next. Forgetting his earlier suspicions, Hitler replied that the letters on the British corpse indicated that the target would be Sardinia.

Dönitz said that he had tried to impress on the Italians that if they did not employ every available ship – big and small – to pump troops and stores into Sardinia, Sicily, and Corsica now, the dismal story of North Africa would be repeated all over again. Mussolini had weakly accepted this.

Dönitz quoted Mussolini as saying that the British press was bragging that the capture of Sicily would release two million tons of shipping presently obliged to detour around the Cape; Hitler irritably interrupted, '. . . and then our fine submarines must sink them.'

'And on top of that,' continued Dönitz, 'we are coming up to our worst U-boat crisis, since the enemy has new detecting gear which makes submarine warfare impossible for the first time.' Suddenly they were losing over fifteen U-boats a month.

'The losses are too high,' exclaimed Hitler. 'We can't go on like this.'

His insomnia returned. The next two weeks in Italy would be crucial. After the noon conference on May 15, Hitler made a two-hour secret speech to his generals, including Rommel, on the dangerous situation left by the defeat in North Africa.

It is so important that the note taken by one officer present, Captain Wolf Junge, is quoted here at length:

The enemy's victory in Africa has not only opened up the east-west passage through the Mediterranean for him, but released eighteen to twenty divisions and considerable air and naval forces.

They will also exploit the new situation for a political offensive designed to use bluster and blandishments to persuade Germany's weak allies to defect. Quite apart from the military position, this is particularly dangerous in Italy and Hungary. Bulgaria and Romania can be regarded as secure. . .

In Italy we can rely only on the Duce. There are strong fears that he may be got rid of or neutralised in some way. The royal family, all leading members of the officers' corps, the clergy, the Jews, and broad sectors of the civil service are hostile or negative toward us. . .

The Duce is now marshalling his Fascist guard about him. But the real power is in the hands of the others. Moreover he is uncertain of himself in military affairs and has to rely on his hostile or incompetent generals (Ambrosio!!!) as is evident from the incomprehensible reply – at least as coming from the Duce – turning down or evading the Führer's offer of troops.

In the present situation a neutral Italy would not be bad at all; but it could not be neutral now – it would defect voluntarily or under pressure to the enemy camp. Italy in enemy hands is the Second Front in Europe we must avoid at all costs; it would lay open the western flank of the Balkans too.

Our main purpose now must be to prevent a Second Front in Europe. 'Europe must be defended in its outfield – we cannot allow a Second Front to emerge on the Reich's frontiers.' It is for this objective that we may have to make sacrifices elsewhere.

It is good that we have not yet attacked in the east ['Citadel'] and still have forces available there; because the decision has been taken to act as soon as a crisis breaks out in Italy. To this end, of the eighteen mobile divisions available in the east, eight armoured and four infantry divisions will have to be rushed to Italy to get a firm grip on her and defend her against the Anglo-Americans (or throw them out again). No resistance of note is expected from the Italians (according to Rommel). Collaboration of the Fascist political forces is hoped for.

At the same time Hungary will be occupied.

The consequences on eastern front will be: defensive evacuation of the Orel Bend; acceptance of risk to the Donets region; if worse comes

> to worst even withdrawal in the north to the Luga line. Zeitzler demanded that the bridgehead on the Kuban should also be given up; but the Führer did not express an opinion on that.
>
> Zeitzler was instructed to work out a timetable for the troop movements [from Russia to Italy]. The next one or two weeks are crucial. . . Every week is vital to us, because after about eight weeks the newly activated 'Stalingrad' divisions in the west will become operational, which would obviate the need to raid the eastern front for divisions.
>
> Thus the main points of the Führer's remarks.

It was certainly a remarkable speech. Quite apart from the first hint at enforced German occupations of Italy and Hungary, it destroys the myth that Hitler always refused to abandon territory voluntarily in Russia, when it was strategically necessary.

WHEN BRITISH newspapers, week after week, mocked the German soldiers for surrendering in Tunisia, Ribbentrop begged the Führer to publish the war diaries proving how heroically they had fought there against impossible odds. Hitler's stubborn refusal was telephoned by Hewel back to Ribbentrop: 'We have to be clear that we have suffered a painful defeat in Africa. If you have taken a knock, you mustn't try and talk your way out of it or pretty things up. You will soon end up like the Italians – who make a veritable saga of every defeat they suffer until the whole world laughs at them. There is only one thing to do at times like this: *Hold your tongue and prepare to counterattack.* Once the counterattack is delivered, all talk of any insufficiency in German soldiers vanishes. Stalingrad is an example: the stories that the German divisions' morale was collapsing stopped the moment we struck back hard at the Russians again, at Kharkov.'

On May 18, Hitler ordered Rommel to set up the skeleton staff of a new army group for what was to be, after all, the military occupation of Italy. The operation – code-named 'Alarich' – was so secret that Hitler declined even to sign the OKW's draft directive. 'This time we've got to be fanatically careful with bits of paper,' he said.

Initially, Rommel's worry was that the Alpine fortifications being hastily completed by the Italians against the Reich frontier might be manned, especially on the Brenner Pass, to keep German divisions out – thus deliberately letting Italy fall into the enemy's hands. Rarely can two ostensibly allied armies have contemplated each other with such veiled mistrust.

Zeitzler had calculated for Hitler that the first reinforcements could be flooding from the Russian front into Italy within ten days of any trouble there. Every two days would then bring a fresh infantry division, spearheaded by three SS armoured divisions – the troops with the closest ideological ties to the Fascist leaders.

A speech by Mussolini's Foreign Minister Bastianini early on May 20 convinced the Führer that dirty work was afoot. 'We must be on our guard, like a spider in its web. Thank God I've a good nose for things like this, so I usually get wind of anything long before it breaks out.'

How far Admiral Canaris warned of the treason in Italy is uncertain. But Himmler's officials left Hitler in no doubt. The Italian Sixth Army based on Sicily was now commanded by General Roatta of Balkan ill-repute. 'Crafty?' exclaimed Hitler, on hearing Roatta's name. 'He is the Fouché of the Fascist revolution, a spy totally devoid of character. A spy is what he is!'

Curiously enough, the German military attaché reports from Rome spoke only in the highest terms of both Roatta and Ambrosio; but this may have been because one of Canaris's assistants, Colonel Emil Helfferich, was attached to the attaché's staff.

With 'Citadel' still delayed, at one P.M. on May 21, 1943, Hitler flew from East Prussia down to Berchtesgaden, after a brief treatment session with his personal surgeon, Dr. Karl Brandt.

Ten days earlier, a fresh electrocardiogram had revealed no improvement in the rapid progressive coronary sclerosis affecting his heart vessels. Marshal Antonescu recommended to him a Viennese dietician, Frau Marlene von Exner. Young, attractive, and good-natured, she soon shared the Führer's table with the other female headquarters staff. She brought back memories of old Vienna to her new employer, and he humoured her cheerful protests at the way National Socialism favoured the rival metropolis of Linz. Whereas she had been able to display her culinary talents to Antonescu in a gourmet welter of oysters, mayonnaise, and caviar delicacies, with Hitler's austere meals she was soon at her wits' end. A typical Berghof menu was that on June 7, 1943: orange juice with linseed gruel; rice pudding with herb sauce; crispbread with butter and nut paste. Hitler adored her.

MUSSOLINI SENT his regrets, he would not be able to come to see him. Probably he feared to leave Italy even for a few hours.

Hitler's plan was to infiltrate four divisions into Italy by stealth; at least sixteen more were to follow under Rommel's command the moment an

enemy invasion occurred. Hitler ordered the Luftwaffe to furnish anti-aircraft batteries for the Brenner Pass; if the Italians demurred, then 'British air raids' were to be faked, using refurbished unexploded RAF bombs hauled out of the ruins of German cities. On June 5, Canaris offered 'Brandenburg' Division commandos who would become members of the gun crews and so be in a position to combat any attempted sabotage on the Alpine passes. Jodl's deputy warned however that no measure casting doubt on Italy's continued will to fight must ever become public.

Admiral Canaris doubted whether their 'true objectives' could be totally concealed from the Italians. To Keitel he suggested that OKW fears of Italian defection were exaggerated, and he even persuaded the guileless field marshal to cancel the anti-sabotage provisions. He also asked for Hitler to attach an Abwehr representative to Rommel's top-secret working party. Then he flew to Rome.

Hitler's June 1943 sojourn at the Berghof was dismal and depressing. What price victory now?

Bormann brought to him a seventy-six-page speech which Goebbels was planning to deliver to Berlin munitions workers on the fifth. Hitler unscrewed the cap from his fountain pen and edited the script. Where Goebbels had written '*when victory is ours*,' Hitler thoughtfully altered the phrase to read 'after this struggle is over.'

At the end of May, Dönitz had frankly outlined to him the catastrophic U-boat situation in the North Atlantic. In May, 38 submarines had been lost compared with 14 in April. On one day, May 8, five U-boats had been destroyed in one convoy battle, and on the twenty-fourth Dönitz had had to call off his attack in the North Atlantic altogether, fearing that he might lose his entire front line to the enemy's new radar (he still resolutely refused to believe that the British could be reading his 'unbreakable' naval codes).

The Germans had learned of the enemy's advances in centimetric radar after examining the remains of a bomber shot down near Rotterdam in February. Dönitz believed that the same equipment lay behind his submarine losses. Keitel instructed Canaris to find out as a matter of urgency.

Hitler had long expected just this setback to the U-boats – he was surprised they had done so well so long. Thus he did not reproach the navy. Until the acoustic homing torpedoes entered service in October as 'destroyer busters,' the U-boats would therefore be restricted in their usefulness. Hitler ordered Dönitz's submarine production increased from thirty

to forty new boats a month, and he approved Dönitz's suggestion that all naval construction work be transferred to Speer's ministry.

On June 15, however, the admiral arrived at the Berghof with a staggering demand for nearly 150,000 men to implement this naval expansion. Hitler told him: 'I just don't have the men. The anti-aircraft and night-fighter defences have got to be increased to protect our cities. The eastern front has got to be strengthened. The army needs divisions for its job defending Europe.'

Dönitz's energy was in stark contrast to Göring's indolence and lethargy that summer. From the Gestapo morale reports, Hitler knew that his people were prey to a growing conviction that nothing could halt the enemy bombing campaign. Every night the British bombers visited a different town or city of the Ruhr, and unloaded one or two thousand tons of bombs over the streets and houses. A handful of bombers breached the Ruhr dams, unleashing the reservoirs on the sleeping populaces below; eight hundred foreign workers drowned in their barracks. By day the American bomber formations completed the destruction. Sometimes the British sent small fast bomber formations, or lone Mosquitoes, each with a one-ton sting, which would circle for hours on end above Berlin, forcing the city's millions of inhabitants to take refuge until the all-clear sounded. Göring's solution was to propose that Germany's bombed-out citizens be evacuated to Burgundy – but in one night over a hundred thousand people lost their homes in Dortmund alone. Not until November was the Luftwaffe expecting to be able to strike back in force. Milch hoped to be manufacturing over three thousand fighters and bombers every month by then.

Hitler ordered bomber squadrons transferred from the west to the Mediterranean; he placed Field Marshal von Richthofen in command of the Second Air Force there. But even Richthofen could not prevent the huge Allied air onslaught that preceded each ground operation there. Six thousand tons of bombs were discharged over the tiny but heavily fortified island of Pantelleria, commanding the shipping routes in the Strait of Sicily. The Italian defenders were so demoralised that they offered to capitulate without firing a shot.

That the Italian soldiers had chosen not to withstand the kind of bombardment that German civilians – men, women, and children alike – were enduring night after night certainly did not augur well for the coming Mediterranean campaigns, Hitler noted.

Correcting the Front Line

No month brought more concentrated high drama than July 1943. 'Citadel' began, the enemy invaded Italian soil, the Russians sprang their own great summer offensive, Mussolini was ousted by his monarch just as Hitler had always predicted, and the war in the air reached a climax in pre-nuclear barbarism.

Until the end of June, Hitler had waited at the Berghof, watching events in Italy, fearing to trigger 'Citadel' – the battle for Kursk – in case Mussolini's generals staged a mass defection while his back was turned. On the sixteenth General Guderian had come and explained why his tank-output estimates had proved over-optimistic; he now suggested that the Panther tank should not be put into action until at least five hundred were available. Zeitzler proposed staying their own hand until the Russians had pushed out westward themselves, and *then* launching a counterattack; tactically it was an attractive idea, but Hitler's objection was that Stalin had no reason to oblige him by attacking before events on the Mediterranean front compelled Germany to send divisions there, and this objection could not be faulted. On June 18, after a fresh conference with Zeitzler and Guderian, Hitler committed himself to the offensive solution and, upon reasoned objections stated by General Model on June 25, finally postponed it until July 5. Kluge and Manstein approved the decision. Yet Hitler clearly anticipated failure, for he forbade the OKW to proclaim 'Citadel' publicly, so that he could deny its existence if he was cheated of success.

When Goebbels drove up to the Obersalzberg on June 24, Hitler had lengthily justified his strategic thinking to him. His armies could not contemplate advancing on the Urals. Despite the superior quality of the new Tiger and Panther battle tanks, he had decided to sit tight and conserve strength until 1944, to render the eastern front impregnable to winter cri-

ses like those of the past two years. He regarded the imminent operation only as a 'minor correction' of the line, which might well rob Stalin of a few armies or even an army group but which would hardly swing neutral world opinion to a view of Germany as victor again.

In the Mediterranean, he said, he expected the Allies to assail Sardinia first and then the Peloponnese. 'The Führer believes he can hold this line,' wrote Goebbels. 'Under no circumstances will he retreat from the Italian mainland. He has no intention of falling back on the Po River, even if the Italians defect; in that case the war in Italy will just have to be fought by us alone.' The Duce himself was old and worn out, said Hitler, and his people were limp and listless; this was why he was determined not to become too powerfully engaged in Russia – it would hamstring him if Italy collapsed.

In the Generalgouvernement of Poland, Hans Frank and his provincial governors complained that it was Himmler's doctrinaire policies that contributed most to the unrest. Meanwhile the SS rampaged regardless of Frank's authority, simply terrorising and intimidating. Himmler's forced resettlement programmes in the Lublin district – with whole villages being expelled overnight and repopulated with bemused German peasants – resulted in the indignant resignation of Frank's governor at Lublin.

Frank took his complaints to Hitler early in May 1943, but Hitler told him his problems were nothing to those of the occupied eastern territories. Hitler's chagrin at the lengthy April ghetto uprising in Warsaw was so great that he would dearly have liked to replace Frank by a tougher viceroy, but by whom? For two hours he debated with Bormann, Ley, and Goebbels the Party's debilitating lack of first-class leadership material. Eventually he decided that Hans Frank must stay. Frank could not help his failure, Hitler admitted; the job was beyond anybody's ability. 'He has to extract food supplies, prevent the unification of his people, ship out the Jews and yet at the same time accommodate the Jews from the Reich, he has to step up arms production, refrain from rebuilding the ruined cities, and so on.'

After a four-hour walk with Reichsführer Himmler on the Obersalzberg on June 19, Hitler endorsed the SS position: no blame was to be attached to the SS for the current increase in partisan activity in Poland or elsewhere. Himmler noted that day: 'When we discussed the Jewish Problem the Führer spoke in favour of the radical completion of the evacuation of the Jews, despite the unrest this will still cause over the next three or four months – that will just have to be put up with.'

The 'Jewish Problem' was taboo at the Berghof. A few days after Himmler's visit, Baldur von Schirach and his pretty wife Henriette were in Hitler's house party. They joined the fireside circle, slumped in the deep armchairs in the semi-darkness. While Hitler sipped his special tea and the others their wine or cognac, Henriette exclaimed that she had just witnessed at Amsterdam the loading of Jews into open trucks for deportation.

'Do you know about it?' she asked. 'Do you permit it?'

Hitler retorted, 'They are being driven off to work, so you needn't pity them. Meantime our soldiers are fighting and dying on the battlefields!' Later he added, 'Let me tell you something. This is a set of scales' – and he put up a hand on each side like the pans. – 'Germany has lost half a million of her finest manhood on the battlefield. Am I to preserve and minister to these others? I want something of our race to survive a thousand years from now.' He reproached her: 'You must learn how to hate!'

The Schirachs were still there the next evening, June 24, when Goebbels wickedly brought the fireside conversation around to Vienna. Until after four A.M. Hitler drew savage comparisons between Schirach's Viennese and Goebbels's Berliners until tears welled up in Henriette's eyes: the Berliners, he said, were hard-working, intelligent, and politically shrewd. Goebbels wrote, 'Frau von Schirach in particular acted like a silly cow . . . and later summed up her unhappiness by saying that she wanted to go back to Munich with her husband and would the Führer send [Gauleiter] Giesler to Vienna instead.' 'Tell me,' Hitler challenged her, 'is your husband our Reich representative in Vienna – or is he Vienna's man in the Reich?' The Schirachs departed in a huff the same night, and never saw Hitler again.

IN THE Ruhr town of Wuppertal, three thousand civilians had been killed by British bombers in half an hour that night. Hitler decided to deliver a fresh homily to Göring the next day. As Goebbels put it in his journal, the Reichsmarschall's stock had now hit rock-bottom. Göring knew it too and anxiously jotted down in his own diary a number of things he intended to say in justification to the Führer:

> Situation in the south! In the south-east! In the north! My own position as commander in chief. Jeschonnek (on leave) – Milch (Udet) controversy. My own activities (stenographic record, produce my appointment diary). Influencing subordinates, consulting with them. Troops' confidence in me.

> Worst will be over this autumn. Inspection visits by me. Examples, Vienna aeroplane-engine works!
>
> *My present task:* Overhauling the air force. Clear technological objectives. Revive flagging spirits.

The bombing war had become a nightmare for Hitler, albeit the ravaging of these ugly Ruhr conurbations did not distress him overmuch; one day, he predicted, Germany would have ten million Volkswagens and five million other cars to contend with, and these towns would have had to be rebuilt with broader boulevards anyway. But Speer was having to divert a hundred thousand men to repair the Ruhr, and the people's morale was brittle.

Hitler promised to make an early surprise visit to the Ruhr. At present every German bomber was needed for 'Citadel' and Italy. He told Goebbels that he had ordered the anti-aircraft and night fighter defences increased. One fighter armed with the new 30-millimetre cannon had recently shot down five bombers in a single night. His forbearance with Göring was truly monumental; he feared to hurt his feelings, but without Göring's knowledge he did invite the leading aircraft manufacturers to see him. He wanted to find out the truth about production failures.

Professor Ernst Heinkel excused his failure to produce a satisfactory heavy bomber by citing Göring's persistent demand that the Heinkel 177 be a dive-bomber – although Göring had forbidden precisely that use ten months earlier. And when Hitler questioned Professor Willy Messerschmitt about the new Me-262 jet aircraft, the brilliant but self-centred aircraft designer pointed out that the jet aircraft's fuel consumption would be far higher than his beloved project the Me-209, and thus secured a Führer Order reversing Milch's earlier decision to mass produce the Me-262.

AT MIDDAY on June 29, 1943 Hitler decided to transfer his headquarters back to the Wolf's Lair. He believed 'Citadel' could safely begin six days later, and on schedule. There seemed clear proof that Stalin was apprehensive about the outcome of 'Citadel': on June 21 the German envoy in Stockholm cabled that the Soviet diplomatist A. M. Alexandrov 'wants to meet with a gentleman from the German foreign service with whom he is acquainted'; and on July 1 a Soviet magazine article derided the 'collective guilt' theory propagated by the West against Germany and hinted that the Reich might even keep Poland and the Sudeten territories.

Hitler arrived back at the Wolf's Lair on July 1. It was unseasonably cold here, and Morell gave him a stiffer than usual cocktail of glucose, multivitamins, and Tonophosphan injections.

That same evening Hitler addressed his 'Citadel' commanders, assembled at Zeitzler's nearby HQ. He explained to them why he had kept postponing 'Citadel' – he now had two thousand tanks ready for the battle, although admittedly half were only the older Mark III.

'In a grave, clear, and confident voice he made the following points,' recorded General Friessner:

> *Our situation.* The blame for our misfortunes must be laid squarely on our allies. The Italians let us down completely. If, as the Führer repeatedly demanded, they had made timely use of their fleet to escort and transport their troops to Africa, Africa would not have been lost. Now their ships are being smashed in their harbours.
>
> Comparison with World War I, where we too conserved our fleet too long until it was too late. – Italians failed on the eastern front, in Greece, etc. Hungary likewise: . . . Romania unreliable: the marshal's brother, Prime Minister [Mihai] Antonescu, is a devious character. Finland at the end of her tether; internal troubles with Social-Democrats, fostered and fed by Sweden.
>
> *What's at stake?* Germany needs the conquered territory, or she will not exist for long. She must win hegemony over Europe. Where we are – we stay. Soldiers must see this, otherwise they'll regard their sacrifices as in vain.
>
> Balkans must not be lost whatever happens; our most vital raw materials for war are there. The Italians have pulled out of Greece and been replaced by Germans. Feel safer since then. Crete is firmly in our hands; thus we prevent enemy from getting air bases.
>
> Greater Germany and Europe must be defended far beyond our frontiers; so far we have managed this perfectly. German troops are now occupying the isles of Rhodes, Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica – the Italians would have long surrendered them, just as they did without fighting in Pantelleria.
>
> *Eastern front.* We will yield nothing without a scrap. . . The Russians are biding their time. They are using their time replenishing for the winter. We must not allow that, or there'll be fresh crises this winter. So we've got to *disrupt* them.

The last sentence indicates how limited 'Citadel's' objective was. Hitler concluded: 'The die has been cast. The attack is on. Everything must now be done to ensure its success.'

The operation itself was barely discussed; General Model repeated his misgivings. Göring and Manstein shared the general optimism about 'Citadel.' Only Jodl did not, fearing that a long-drawn-out battle lay before them. But Hitler reassured his generals. Of course the attack was a risk, he admitted, but he felt it had to be taken. In his words, 'Citadel' had to procure a victory 'to dispel the gloom of our allies and crush any silent hopes still stirring within our subjugated peoples' breasts.'

'Citadel' began early on July 5. The Russians had been forewarned – once again thanks to Britain's code-breaking. An immense and bloody battle ensued, one of the greatest tank battles in history. Longing for word of great victories, Hitler telephoned Zeitzler and Jeschonnek repeatedly for the latest news. By evening it seemed that the battle was going well. General Dessloch's and General Robert Ritter von Greim's combined Air Forces (the Fourth and Sixth) had flown 4,570 sorties, destroying 432 Russian planes. Manstein had plunged eleven miles northward into the enemy fortifications; Kluge had come seven miles south toward him. Between their spearheads lay the city of Kursk – and 3,000 tanks which Stalin had thrown into the defence. Morell checked Hitler early on the sixth and wrote in his diary: 'Injections as always. . . Slept only three hours because of his nervousness (attacking on the eastern front since yesterday).' The physician ordered Hitler to get as much sleep as possible in the afternoons. The familiar euphoria gripped the Wolf's Lair. In the first three days there were 30,000 German casualties, but Zeitzler could report that tank losses were at an acceptable level. By the eighth, 460 enemy tanks had been destroyed; Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army knocked out 195 that day alone.

But in the south the technical inadequacy of the much vaunted Panther battle tank hampered Manstein's offensive badly. On that first day alone, all but 40 broke down. Nonetheless, while in the north Model's Ninth Army found it could penetrate no farther, little now lay ahead of Manstein in the south. Rommel noted in his diary on July 9: 'Noon, at war conference with Führer: attack in the east is going well.'

THAT AFTERNOON Hitler received the first reports that a large enemy invasion operation was under way in the Mediterranean. Luftwaffe aircraft sighted the ships after they sailed from Malta and Pantelleria. By late evening it was

clear they were heading for Sicily. There were reports of enemy paratroop landings and a heavy naval bombardment of the island's main harbours at Syracuse, Catania, and Augusta. The next morning the invasion began. Hitler was told at his noon conference that three hundred ships were involved.

This could not have come at a less propitious moment for Hitler's strategy. The most disturbing accounts of the Italian officers' actions reached Hitler. Admiral Priam Leonardi, the commandant of Augusta, falsely reported that on July 11 enemy assault craft had landed there; the Italian defenders at once blew up their guns and ammunition and set fire to their fuel dumps – the anti-aircraft batteries at Augusta and Priolo fired their entire ammunition into the sea and blew up their guns as well. 'On the afternoon of July 11 there was not one Italian soldier left in Schmalz's brigade area under any kind of command. Every single officer had abandoned his troops during the morning and was heading for Catania on bicycles and motor transport.'

By July 12 the enemy had landed 160,000 men and 600 tanks on Sicily. On that day Stalin launched his own counteroffensives.

WHY DID Hitler's continued buoyancy remain undiminished even now? He felt that even if 'Citadel' were now called off, it would still have drawn the Soviet dragon's teeth: Manstein alone counted 24,000 prisoners by July 13; and he had also captured or destroyed 1,800 enemy tanks, 267 artillery pieces, and 1,080 anti-tank guns. In Hitler's view Stalin had had no option but to counterattack now, because famine and unrest were sweeping his country. This was well supported by Zeitzler's Intelligence experts, who had sorted through hundreds of bags of captured Russian mail. There were comparisons with the disastrous Soviet famine of 1921.

Above all, Hitler now had the prospect of new German 'secret weapons' to sustain him. On July 8 Dönitz came with blueprints of the new Type XXI submarine, diesel-electric, with an underwater speed so high that it would frustrate all the enemy's defensive tactics. His experts hoped the first such boats would be ready by November 1944; Dönitz also hoped to fit out all his U-boats soon with a simple device that would give them ample warning that a radar set was homing onto them. A new anti-shipping mine had been developed – so potent and so difficult to combat that for the present Hitler would not even allow his navy to employ it for fear the enemy would capture one and use the device in far greater numbers against Germany. As Speer came in, Hitler turned to him. 'The most vital thing is

to build this new U-boat.' Speer replied, 'We all agree on that. We have already ordered that it is to take priority over everything else.'

That same day Speer brought to him the top scientists of the army's rocket missile research laboratory at Peenemünde. Hitler had been cool toward the army's A-4 rocket project, but Brauchitsch had backed the A-4 project, and General Friedrich Fromm, commander of the Replacement Army, had been a dedicated benefactor; he had shown Speer over Peenemünde in June 1942 and the new minister had lent it his authority. Hitler had told Speer some months later that the A-4 would be pointless unless five thousand were available for the first salvo and production ran at the rate of three thousand a month.

The problem was that each rocket had only a one-ton warhead, yet cost as much as one hundred of the pilotless 'flying bombs' being built by the Luftwaffe; it was fuelled by such exotic substances as liquid oxygen and pure alcohol, and the aluminium and the electronics equipment were needed far more urgently for the Luftwaffe's industry. But Speer turned a blind eye on this, for he was not, after all, accountable for the aircraft industry as yet. On July 8 he introduced to Hitler the men behind the A-4 project: Gerhard Degenkolb, the man who was to mass-produce the rockets; General Walter Dornberger, commandant of Peenemünde; and the young chief scientist, Wernher von Braun. Hitler watched their film of the rocket and promoted Braun to professor on the spot. Both the army and the Luftwaffe assured him that their missiles would be operational against England before the year was out.

Two days later Heinrich Himmler came to the Wolf's Lair. The A-4 rocket was at the top of his agenda. Himmler never disappointed Hitler, let alone bored him. Today the Reichsführer wanted to advocate turning the Polish underground army against Stalin. The Poles were bitterly disillusioned that Churchill had torn up Chamberlain's guarantee to Poland, and when the Gestapo captured their chief, General Stefan Rowecki, Himmler felt they could be swung around to fight Stalin instead of the German occupation forces. Hitler read Rowecki's *vita* and admitted that he had had the same idea. But he decided against it: Rowecki was obviously a leader, and such men were dangerous.

Himmler noted: 'The Führer then reiterated the basis of our Polish policies. These I was aware of and fully understand.' Hitler had no such compunctions about using non-Slav soldiers. He particularly wanted to attract British captives into joining the fight. Hewel had noted after a

conversation with Hitler on November 29, 1942: 'He believes that countless patriotic Englishmen must be suffering under their present regime, as they see the future danger of the Jews, and particularly the Bolsheviks, taking over the Empire. He considers it quite possible that given suitable treatment a British legion could be raised to fight in British uniforms against Bolshevism. Such a legion would be more welcome to him than one of any other nationality.'

STALIN'S COUNTEROFFENSIVE had begun north of operation 'Citadel,' with Orel as its target. On July 13, the Führer summoned both army group commanders, Manstein and Kluge. Kluge favoured calling off 'Citadel.' Manstein, still brimming with optimism, took the opposite view. His armies were on the brink of victory – if he could add the Twenty-fourth Panzer Corps to them, it would tilt the balance finally against the defenders of Kursk; the Russians had thrown their last reserves into the battle. He felt that he could still encircle and destroy half the troops defending Kursk. If the battle were tamely abandoned, the enemy would be free to cause trouble later elsewhere along the front.

When Kluge declared that the Ninth Army could not resume the attack either now or later, Hitler irritably exclaimed, 'The Russians manage everything, and we manage nothing at all!'

Thus the battle was stopped – neither defeat nor victory. Hitler had lost 20,720 men, including 3,330 dead. 'That's the last time I will heed the advice of my General Staff!' he proclaimed to his adjutants. But the Russians had suffered the heavier losses in 'Citadel' – 17,000 dead and 34,000 prisoners. Their tactical reserves had been decimated. Accordingly, the next weeks were to see the Russian summer offensive faltering: when they launched a further attack on Manstein's southern front on July 17, Mackensen's First Panzer Army and General Karl Hollidt's new Sixth Army were able to beat them back, taking 18,000 prisoners and destroying 700 tanks in two weeks. When Stalin issued his order of the day on the twenty-fourth announcing his victory at Kursk – he claimed that 70,000 Germans had died, and 2,800 German tanks been destroyed – Hitler remarked, 'My feeling is: this proves he has called off his own show. . . Stalin has abandoned all hope of pushing on here in one big *furioso*.' It seemed that stability had returned to the Russian front.

In Sicily however there was crisis. The Italians were barely putting up the pretence of a fight. All the indications were that Mussolini's renegade

generals and the king were plotting his overthrow. Why otherwise did Ambrosio now play the familiar Italian card of raising impossible demands for modern tanks and aircraft to be supplied forthwith by Germany?

The American army readily mopped up the Italians in western Sicily, but the British Eighth Army was soon held up by a tough, predominantly German-manned line of defence forward of Mount Etna. Mussolini attempted to push the blame for the inevitable loss of Sicily onto the Germans for having failed to meet Ambrosio's supply demands. On July 13 thirty Italian torpedo boats did sally forth to attack enemy ships off Syracuse, but they returned unscathed, lamely pleading that they had not found any Allied shipping. Richthofen sneered in his diary: 'As expected, the Italian fleet has not even put to sea "to save its honour."'

Dönitz telephoned Hitler's headquarters to say that if Hitler so commanded he was willing to take over the Italian navy at once, so as to bring at least the loyal destroyers and submarines into action. Hitler was certainly minded to ride roughshod over Italian sovereignty. He sent a major to Sicily with the top-secret oral instruction that the German corps commander was to take over the battle himself, 'unobtrusively excluding' Italians from control. A German commandant was also nominated for the Strait of Messina; the Italian batteries there were to be manned with German crews if need be. Dönitz eagerly supplied 1,723 naval gunners. On the fourteenth, the OKW brought its contingency plans for a lightning German action against Italy and the Italian-occupied Balkans up to date.

On July 14 Hitler showed Mussolini's letter – drafted by Ambrosio – demanding 2,000 aircraft to Field Marshal Milch. In the last three weeks 320 Axis aircraft had been destroyed in attacks on Italian airfields; 36 fighters out of 40 had just suffered tire damage, because the Italians had not bothered to sweep the runways clear of bomb fragments after a raid. Milch assured the Italian ambassador that 'the Führer could hardly have provided better air support for Germany than he is providing for Italy. Hundreds of aircraft are already on their way to Italy and hundreds more are on their way at the expense of the night-fighter defences of our own western air space.' Jodl warned that it seemed that Ambrosio was plotting to lure as many elite German divisions as possible to the south, where they could be cut off and turned over to the enemy on a platter when the time came.

Hitler had to get Mussolini to rid himself of General Ambrosio, his own appointed gravedigger, somehow. Dönitz asked that the Italian admiralty also be frozen out, to reduce its present unholy influence on the campaign.

Hitler decided to meet Mussolini again. Meanwhile he picked General Hube, the veteran of Stalingrad, to command all ground troops in Sicily. Göring tried hard to get his own General Rainer Stahel appointed, but Rommel out-argued him.

Hitler had intended giving Rommel overall command in Italy; but now Göring got his revenge. On July 18, Rommel wrote in his diary: 'At midday with the Führer. . . I learn that the Führer has been advised not to make me Commander in Chief in Italy, as I am supposed to be hostile toward the Italians. I assume the Luftwaffe is behind this.'

Two new army groups were now created: B, to be commanded by Rommel from Salonika, covering Greece, Crete, and the Aegean; and E, commanded by General Löhr from Belgrade to control the rest of the Balkans. In the event, Rommel's new appointment lasted just one week.

THE UNCERTAINTY about Italy gnawed literally at the pit of Hitler's stomach. Before flying south on July 18, 1943, in his personal FW200 Condor, he sent urgently for Professor Morell at 10:30 A.M. The doctor wrote in his diary: 'Führer says he's had the most violent stomach pains since three A.M. and hasn't slept a wink. His abdomen is as taut as a board, full of gas. . . Looking *very* pale and exceptionally jumpy: facing a vital conference with the Duce in Italy tomorrow. Diagnosis: *spastic constipation* caused by overwork over the last few days – three days with virtually no sleep, one conference after another and working far into the night. . . As he can't duck out of some important conferences and decisions before his departure at 3:30 P.M., no narcotics can be given him; I can only give him an intravenous injection of one ampoule of Eupaverin [a morphine substitute], some gentle stomach massage, two Euflat pills, and three spoons of olive oil. . . Before leaving for the airfield I give him an intramuscular Eukodal injection. He is looking very bad and feeling rather faint.' Göring joined them in the plane and pressed his own medical advice on Morell – the Führer should take more Euflat and Luizym tablets.

Looking deathly, Hitler sat just behind the cockpit, his papers spread out on the folding table, meditating that it was all turning out just as he had feared. 'This was precisely why I was so apprehensive about launching our offensive in the east,' he would say a few days later. 'I kept thinking that at the same time we'd find our hands full down south.'

'During the actual flight,' Morell observed in his diary, '[Hitler] let off wind, which resulted in some improvement. Up at the Berghof I gave him

another body massage, with more Euflat followed by the Luizym I have been giving him repeatedly for some time.' Hitler retired for the night soon after midnight. Professor Morell woke him to administer the 'injections as usual' at 6:30 A.M. the next day, July 19. 'His abdomen is supple, he has slept well, and let off a lot of wind.' The doctor thrust several of his own patent Vitamultin bars into Hitler's hand for the day's trip down to see Mussolini. Hitler took off at 7:30 A.M. for Treviso. His strategy now was this: somehow they must tempt the Allies to pour reinforcements into Sicily; then the Luftwaffe would bomb the supply ships and starve the invader into submission. It would be Tunis in reverse. He had therefore resolved to confront Mussolini with a personal ultimatum: Sicily must be effectively defended – with a view to reverting to the offensive later on – or it should be abandoned, and the decisive battle fought on the Italian mainland.

Mussolini probably wanted to impart to the Führer that his country could no longer fight on. Hitler did not however give him a real opportunity to speak his mind. The account rendered in Mussolini's diary describes how things went from the moment Hitler arrived at the Treviso airfield:

> Punctually at nine the Führer landed. He inspected the guard of honour and we proceeded to the station. After about an hour the train left us at a station outside Feltre. An automobile bore us onward to the villa selected for our meeting, the house of Senator Gaggia, a veritable labyrinth of rooms and salons which are still a nightmare in my memory. We arrived there after an hour's drive in an open car under a scorching sun, during which I merely exchanged polite small talk with the Führer.
>
> The actual meeting began at noon. . . The Führer began the talking, and continued for two hours. His words were taken down in shorthand and the complete text of his speech is in foreign ministry files. Scarcely had he begun when my secretary came in with a telephone message from Rome: 'Since eleven A.M. Rome has been under intense air bombardment.' I informed the Führer and the others.
>
> The news charged the atmosphere with tragedy – the atmosphere crowded in on us with each fresh telephone message reporting the exceptional length of the raid, the number of bombers employed, and the severe damage (including the university and the church of San Lorenzo).
>
> When the Führer had concluded his speech, a first confidential exchange of opinions took place between the two of us. He imparted two important facts to me: firstly, the U-boat war was about to be resumed

> with other means; and secondly, at the end of August the German Luftwaffe would begin reprisal attacks on London, razing it to the ground within a week. I replied that in anticipation of the reprisals this would provoke, Italy's air defences would have to be [strengthened].
>
> I was then called away to receive fresh reports, whereupon it was time to return. Only during the hour-long train journey could I make one thing plain to him: that Italy is now withstanding the weight of two empires – Britain and the United States – and there is a very real and growing danger of her being crushed beneath them. The bombing of our cities damages not only our public's morale and powers of resistance, but also our main war production. I told him again that the campaign in Africa would have ended very differently had we been at least equal, if not superior, to the enemy air force. I also warned that the nervous tension within my country is now at an extreme and dangerous pitch.
>
> He told me the Italian crisis was a leadership crisis, and hence a human one. He would send reinforcements for the air force and new divisions to defend the peninsula. He declared that the defence of Italy is also in Germany's highest interests. His choice of words was friendly at all times, and we parted on the best of terms. The Führer's aircraft took off soon afterward.

Hitler was satisfied with the outcome of this – as it happened, last – visit to Italy. He believed he had revitalised the Italian effort. His generals were unimpressed. Field Marshal von Richthofen wrote that day: 'At the villa the Führer delivered a two-hour speech on how to fight wars and battles. Nobody apart from the Duce understood a word. Afterward, Ambrosio observed with a smirk that it was not so much a *colloquio* as a *disloquio*. . . The Führer was tired from so much energetic speaking, but looked well, much better than the Duce. . . The whole show has probably produced less than one could conceal under a little fingernail.' 'Back on the Obersalzberg this evening,' recorded Hitler's doctor, 'he declares that the credit for the day's success goes to me. He feels completely well again.'

That evening, July 19, Martin Bormann showed to Hitler an Intelligence report cabled by Himmler to the Berghof. It contained clear evidence that 'a coup d'état is being planned to get rid of the Duce and install Marshal Badoglio to form a war cabinet.' Himmler's report said: 'B. is known to be a leading Freemason in Italy. His aim is said to be to commence immediate peace talks the moment the Anglo-American troops have completed their

occupation of Sicily.' There was no point in warning Mussolini – he was too naïve. On the station he had blurted out to Hitler: 'I just don't know why my generals are stationing such strong forces up here in the north.'

Shortly afterward, German railroad officials tipped off the OKW that the Italians were stockpiling ammunition in the fortifications facing the Reich. Hitler invited Rommel to his evening conference on July 20: 'His talk with Duce yielded no real clear decisions,' noted the field marshal. 'Duce unable to act as he would wish. I am to take command over Greece, including the islands, for the time being, so that I can pounce on Italy later.' The next day he wrote: 'Morning conference: . . . The Duce is aware of his colleagues' political intentions.'

On July 23, he flew off to begin his task in Greece. Here apart from the questionable Italian Eleventh Army he would command only one German panzer division and three German infantry divisions.

On July 24 storm cones were hoisted over southern Europe. News reached Hitler that the Fascist Grand Council was meeting that evening for the first time in years. As midnight passed without word from Rome, Hitler grumbled that if a German had pulled a trick like that on *him*, he would have had Himmler haul him off straight away: 'What good can possibly come of such a meeting? Just empty chatter!'

Before he retired for the night, a report reached him that the British had attacked Hamburg with a thousand heavy bombers. The first photos were shown to him the next morning. Corpses littered the streets – women with their hair in curlers, children seeking shelter in the arms of fire-fighters. In one parish alone eight hundred had died. At his noon conference on the twenty-fifth Hitler learned that the enemy had found a simple means of jamming the ground and airborne radar sets. Part of Hamburg's anti-aircraft batteries had been sacrificed for the defence of Italy anyway.

Hitler steeled his heart. For the present, Rome was more important. He swung around on Hewel: 'See that you find out what you can.' Hewel replied, 'They adjourned their *consiglio* at three this morning. I'll find out the moment anything comes through.' By the time the conference ended at two P.M. he could still report only that wild rumours were sweeping Rome.

Later that day word came that Marshal Badoglio had asked the German ambassador to see him. Badoglio dropped his bombshell: Mussolini had resigned. The king had asked the marshal to set up a military government.

'Badoglio has taken over,' exclaimed Hitler to Keitel that evening. 'The blackest of our enemies!'

'Axis'

Hitler's initial instinct was to send paratroops to Rome, flush out the monarchy, the traitors, and the Vatican, and restore the wronged dictator to power. As July 26, 1943, dawned, he even sent out orders for his troops to abandon Sicily forthwith, leaving their tanks and equipment where they were; for between Sicily and the Brenner Pass there were virtually no German troops at all – a thousand miles of Italian coastline along which the enemy might at any moment land and be positively welcomed by the new regime in Rome. Were he in Churchill's shoes he would have struck at once to reap such a rich reward. Yet as the days passed and more moderate advisers came to the Wolf's Lair, reason prevailed; now time worked in Hitler's favour. Throughout August the Wehrmacht foothold in Italy was steadily strengthened, in spite of Badoglio's protests. A brilliant rearguard action was fought in Sicily after all. And when in September Badoglio and his generals finally fulfilled the Führer's gloomiest predictions and hoisted the long-prepared white flag of surrender, Hitler was ready to step in.

The stenographic records show how effectively he could grapple with major crises. Sepp Dietrich's SS Life Guard Division must be rushed from the eastern front to Italy at once; the seventy thousand German troops in Sicily must be brought back to the mainland – abandoning their heavy equipment if need be. 'They can make short work of the Italians with pistols too.' There must be an evacuation of Sicily 'like Dunkirk' in 1940. The 3rd Panzer-Grenadier Division must seize Rome, arrest the government, and kidnap the king and above all the crown prince, who would be retained as hostages to guarantee that Italy abide by her pact with Germany; Badoglio must be captured dead or alive; Mussolini must be found and rescued, if he had not already been put to death, in which case his body must be recov-

ered to prevent the enemy from putting it on public display. And Rommel! 'Find out where Rommel is!'

At 11:15 p.m. on July 25 the OKW telephoned the field marshal in Salonika to return to the Führer's headquarters at once.

From all over Germany they flew in to the Wolf's Lair – Himmler, Guderian, Goebbels, Göring; Speer was already there; Ribbentrop, convalescing from a lung ailment, arrived looking pale and drawn; Dönitz decided to come with several of his staff; Schmundt was ordered back from leave.

What disturbed all the Party leaders most was this vivid proof that dictatorships could be toppled with such ease. As Jodl bluntly put it, ruminating out loud to Hitler: 'The fact is, the whole Fascist movement went pop, like a soap bubble!' Hitler directed Himmler to ensure that nothing went pop in Germany.

That Mussolini, a leader bound to him by destiny, should have been so ignobly deposed by traitors and vassals of the monarchy, made his blood boil. Hitler did not doubt that Badoglio was already working hand-in-glove with the enemy. 'We can be clear on one score: traitors that they are, they will of course proclaim their intention of continuing the fight. Of course! But it will be a betrayal.' He smiled contemptuously. 'We shall be playing the same game, leading them on until we suddenly drop like lightning on the whole bag of them and round up the entire gang.' On July 26 he sent Captain Wolf Junge to Kesselring with oral orders to stand by to seize Rome and prevent the Italian fleet's escape. Hitler instructed the Second Paratroop Division to fly to an airport outside Rome the next day without advance warning to either Kesselring or the Italians. The 3rd Panzer-Grenadier Division was also to move to the outskirts of the capital.

In the teahouse of the Wolf's Lair Himmler had lined up half a dozen Luftwaffe and army special agents as candidates for the job of rescuing the mislaid Fascist dictator, now known to have been arrested on the king's orders on leaving the palace. Otto Günsche, Hitler's bodyguard, took them into the Führer's study. Hitler asked each in turn: 'What do you think of the Italians?' The last of them, a burly scarfaced Waffen SS *Sturmbannführer* (captain), growled: 'What a question, mein Führer! And me an Austrian!'

Hitler picked this man, Otto Skorzeny; Skorzeny would leave with General Student for Rome next morning. The latter parted from Hitler with the words: 'A tough but particularly rewarding mission, mein Führer!'

Worn out, that evening Hitler ate alone. No less than thirty-five people packed the following war conference. Two factions were clearly crystallising: the one, led by Dönitz and Jodl, decried precipitate action against Italy; the other, led by Hitler, wanted Student's paratroops to pounce. Rommel wanted the whole operation adequately thought out, but Goebbels felt that the British would hardly wait a week while Rommel was doing his thinking. Göring had already stated his opinion at midday: 'Our opponents will obviously scream to the Allies for help and beg for protection.' Hitler pointed out: 'But it will still take them some time to get ready to invade.' At first the British would be nonplussed – they always were. Everybody, particularly Goebbels and Ribbentrop, opposed Hitler's plan to sweep through the Vatican as well; 'apologies afterward' would never repair the harm this would do to Germany's image abroad.

Meanwhile Kesselring and Richthofen insisted from their Italian headquarters that Badoglio would stay loyal to the Axis cause; Badoglio had received Kesselring that evening. 'You see, Field Marshal,' the new Italian leader explained disarmingly, 'this is the problem that gives me sleepless nights. How to lead a defeated army on to victory?' Kesselring reported innocently that Badoglio had only replaced Mussolini to provide the strong war leadership needed to restore honour to Italian arms. Hitler could only chuckle at Kesselring's gullibility.

Militarily, Hitler knew he could not defend the entire Italian mainland once Badoglio defected. 'In the course of events we shall obviously have to fall back along here somewhere,' he had said on July 25, tapping the map of Italy. 'That is quite plain.'

In addition to the divisions he was already moving into northern Italy from southern France, he wanted three SS armoured divisions taken out of Manstein's Army Group South: the SS divisions were most politically akin to Fascism. Their transfer would in turn necessitate withdrawing the German salient at Orel to release divisions for Manstein.

Kluge, brought before Hitler on the twenty-sixth, was aghast. 'Mein Führer! I am bound to point out that there is nothing we can release at this moment. That is quite out of the question at present!'

Only when his army group had fallen back on the new 'Hagen' line, along the Dnieper, could he offer any help; but construction of this sector of the East Wall had only just been begun and would not be ready for occupation before September.

Hitler feared that Badoglio would have defected long before then.

'September is quite impossible, Field Marshal!' he retorted. And he angrily commented, 'The swine on the other side shovel out a line in two days, and *we* can't throw *them* out!'

The next evening Field Marshal von Richthofen arrived from Rome. The war conference lasted until nearly midnight. 'Everybody very rude about Kesselring,' wrote Richthofen. 'I counterattack. Some of his dispatches are admittedly psychologically tactless, but by and large objective and accurate. I identify myself with them. . . Rommel knows nothing, thank God says nothing, and is just revelling in feelings of revenge against the Italians, whom he hates. Dönitz is moderate and sensible. Everybody else, especially Ribbentrop, just repeating whatever the Führer says.'

Richthofen did predict that Marshal Badoglio might raise impossible military demands and use their non-fulfillment as a pretext to deal with the enemy; almost on cue Ambassador Mackensen's telegram arrived from Rome, announcing just such Italian demands. Richthofen urged Hitler to appear to accept everything in order to win time to infiltrate Rommel's divisions into Italy. Hitler's big worry however was that in silent agreement with Badoglio the British would suddenly arrive by air and sea in Italy. On this score Richthofen had to agree. Hitler ordered: 'Student is to fulfil his mission as soon as possible.'

IT WAS at this moment that a blustering speech by Churchill rescued Hitler from his dilemma. Speaking in the House of Commons in London, he said that nothing short of 'wholesale unconditional surrender' would prevent Italy from being 'seared and scarred and blackened from one end to the other': 'We should let the Italians, to use a homely phrase, stew in their own juice for a bit.' Now Hitler knew he would have *time* after all. A message was sent to Kesselring reminding him not to let General Student unleash 'Operation Black,' his plan to occupy Rome, 'through any misunderstanding.'

An immensely self-satisfied Führer joined his field marshals for lunch that day, July 28. By evening his mind was made up against precipitate action. Despite the curiously reassuring appreciations of Admiral Canaris's Abwehr, Hitler had more than enough evidence of Badoglio's stealthy and treacherous manoeuvres. Through the SS-fostered 'Post Office Research Institute' Hitler obtained on July 29 the transcript of a radio-telephone conversation held soon after midnight between Churchill and Roosevelt. They had gossiped about the 'imminent armistice with Italy' in language

that told Hitler that Roosevelt at least was in secret contact with King Victor Emmanuel but that many days would pass before Italy would defect, because first the terms of the armistice would have to be thrashed out, and Churchill wanted to prevent the sixty thousand British prisoners in Italy from being shipped to 'Hunland,' as he called Germany.

On July 30, Rommel's army group reported that the Italian defences along the Brenner were being stealthily reinforced, and demolition charges laid. Canaris's Intelligence agencies played all this down. When it was learned that the *Comando Supremo* had burnt its secret files two days before the Duce's overthrow, Colonel Alexis von Roenne (chief of Zeitzler's Intelligence section, 'Foreign Armies West') swore that this did not indicate that treason was in the air. At the beginning of August, Canaris came to Hitler's headquarters and reported on a meeting he had just had with General Amé, his Italian opposite number: the Abwehr chief blandly assured Keitel that Badoglio was resolved to fight on. 'There is no question of any peace negotiations.'* During August, the discrepancy between these assessments by Canaris and Roenne on the one hand, and those by the SS, the foreign ministry, the Forschungsamt, and the frontier gauleiters in Austria on the other grew so wide that the German admiralty raised a scandalised comment in its war diary. At talks with Keitel and Ribbentrop in Tarvisio on August 6, General Ambrosio again assured the Germans that Italy 'wanted to fight on at Germany's side,' but his lack of interest in securing more German arms and material told Ribbentrop all he needed to know. He telephoned Hitler immediately – this was 'treason, one hundred percent.'

Under the new code word 'Axis' – previously 'Alarich' – Hitler's planning for the occupation of Italy and the seizure of her idle fleet at La Spezia would continue throughout August 1943. Mussolini had still not been found by the Führer's agents. All that was known was that he was still alive, because Hitler's sixtieth birthday gift to him – a twenty-four-volume set of Nietzsche – was duly acknowledged by the deposed dictator. Meanwhile, the hunt for his place of imprisonment went on.

* General Amé later reminisced that Canaris met him in Venice on July 30 with the whispered congratulation: 'We hope our July 25 will also soon come!' Canaris begged Amé to do everything to prevent the entry of more German troops. The SS learned of this, but Himmler declined to unmask Canaris to Hitler at this stage. Both Canaris and Roenne were later hanged for treason.

The Anglo-American air offensive had not lessened. After the first big Hamburg raid Hitler had greedily signed Albert Speer's draft decree for the mass production of the army's A-4 rocket missile – the later V-2 – to bombard London that autumn; heedless of the effect on the Luftwaffe's aircraft industry, he had on July 25 ordered all available skilled labour, raw materials, machine tools, and electric power devoted on high priority to the rocket missile. 'You can only smash terror with counter-terror,' he reiterated that day. 'Otherwise the time will come when the people here just lose faith completely in the Luftwaffe.' But the anti-aircraft gunners and fighter pilots were now fighting with their radars blinded by the Allied electronic countermeasures. During the nights that followed, Hamburg suffered three more catastrophic RAF attacks. In one, an immense firestorm began, the huge fires creating hurricane-strength winds that sucked trees, rooftops, debris, and people into their flames. The tens of thousands sheltering in the massive concrete bunkers were incinerated alive. Nearly fifty thousand people were killed in this one city, Hamburg, during this last July week of terror in 1943. On August 1 Speer dismally predicted to Hitler that if six more cities were given the same treatment, the war would be over.

Hitler ordered the women and children moved out of the Reich capital at once. Under the determined command of its gauleiter Dr. Goebbels, Berlin was evacuated of one million civilians in grim anticipation of the raids to come. On August 13 the American bombing of Wiener Neustadt resulted in a four-hour row between Hitler and Jeschonnek. Four days later the Americans bombed the ball-bearing works at Schweinfurt and Messerschmitt's plant at Regensburg. That night the British saturated Peenemünde with bombs, killing seven hundred of their best missile scientists and slave labourers. Jeschonnek committed suicide, shooting himself the next morning, and Milch at last persuaded his successor, General Günther Korten, to transfer fighter squadrons back to the defence of the Reich.

Reichsmarschall Göring presented Korten to Hitler on August 20; on the same day Hitler discussed with Dr. Ley and leading architects how to provide for the bombed-out families. Ley offered to build 350,000 homes a year, but Speer interrupted: 'I will not provide the materials, because I cannot.' Hitler would not hear of that. 'I need a million new homes,' he said, 'and fast. Each about ten feet by twelve; it is immaterial whether they are of wood, concrete, or prefabricated slabs. I am even thinking in terms of mud huts or at worst just holes in the ground simply covered over with planks. The houses should be built singly in individual plots, around towns

and villages, where possible scattered about among the trees.' These houses would have no lavatory, or gas, water, or electricity – just the barest essentials in a form that even old women or children could easily erect, for their menfolk were at the front: two benches, a table, a cupboard, and nails to hang their clothes on. 'We are forced to build as spartanly as possible, so there must be no distinction between them. The main thing is for these people to have a roof over their heads when winter comes; otherwise they will perish.'

Himmler, eager to expand his own empire, offered to Speer concentration camp labour to build missile factories and to man the assembly lines; he also offered him the use of the SS proving ground at Blizna, Poland, for rocket-launching trials. Hitler ordered Speer and the SS chief to make the maximum use of caves, tunnels, and bunkers for what all three evidently considered a significant element of Germany's coming strategy, namely rocket missile retaliation against England. The German people must at all costs stand fast during the trying months to come: until the fighter and anti-aircraft defences mastered the bombing terror, until the missile attack on London could begin – and until the monolithic Anglo-American and Soviet facade began to crack.

Hitler believed that the evidence justified his expectations that one day the western Allies would turn against Moscow.

The first straw in the wind had been the creation of a puppet Polish committee in Moscow. In July 1943, Stalin had followed this with a 'Free Germany' committee consisting of exiled Communists and renegade generals captured at Stalingrad. Now it should at last dawn upon the British press where Moscow proposed to lay the post-war boundaries of the Bolshevik empire. 'I fully recognise that at present a ruthless desire to destroy us is rampant in Britain and America,' reflected Hitler. 'But the British have got it all quite wrong! They declared war to preserve the "balance of power" in Europe. But now Russia has awakened and turned into a state of the highest technical and material calibre. . . This means that the onslaught from the east can in the future only be met by a united Europe under German leadership. That is in Britain's interest too.'

It would soon be mid-August. Still Hitler hesitated to order General Hube to evacuate his sixty thousand troops from Sicily to the mainland: on the one hand Admiral Dönitz protested about relinquishing Sicily to the enemy; on the other, General Jodl warned that the moment military opera-

tions were launched for the rescue of Mussolini or the seizure of Rome and the Italian fleet at La Spezia, the Italians would cut all the supply routes to Sicily and the sixty thousand men would be lost. Kesselring, Mackensen, and Rintelen all reported that Badoglio could be trusted. From his gauleiter in the Tyrol, however, Hitler learned that the Italians had stealthily moved three divisions into Bolzano and Merano. 'These steps were obviously taken,' he realised, 'to satisfy the Anglo-American requirement that Italy must take positive action against Germany if she is to get better peace terms.' Hitler now told General Heinrich von Vietinghoff, whose new Tenth Army would take over the two corps stationed in southern Italy, that he proposed to evacuate it eventually, and 'would not be happy until all those divisions from southern Italy and Sicily were standing south of Rome.'

'M[ussolini] probably won't be coming back,' wrote Rommel from his Munich headquarters. 'The Fascist party was evidently very corrupt and was swept away in a matter of hours. . . On the other hand it suits us well, as now there is only one great man to lead in Europe.'

Admiral Dönitz shared Rommel's sentiments about Hitler, writing after forty-eight hours at the Wolf's Lair: 'The enormous energy the Führer radiates, his unerring conviction, his prophetic analysis of the situation in Italy – all these have very much brought home to us these last few days what poor worms we all are in comparison to the Führer!'

Rommel flew up from Munich to the Wolf's Lair on August 11:

> Göring, Dönitz, Student and Himmler are at the [midday] conference. . .
>
> Discussing Italy, the Führer agrees with my own views. Führer appears to intend sending me in quite soon. Like me he doesn't believe in the honesty of the Italians. . . The Führer says the Italians are playing for time; then they will defect. . . The Führer evidently wants to adhere to his old plan of restoring Fascism to power, as this is the only way to guarantee that Italy will unconditionally stand by us.
>
> He has sharp words of condemnation for the work of Mackensen, Rintelen, and Kesselring, as they – and particularly Kesselring – still totally misinterpret the Italian situation and blindly trust the new regime. . . Lunch with the Führer. I sit on his left. A very spirited discussion, with the Führer evidently delighted I am there. Again and again I find that he has complete confidence in me. . .
>
> Before supper I confer with Jodl. His plan, based on our proposal, was for me to take command in Upper Italy. My new draft has me in

> command of all Italy, with two armies (north and south), while being myself under the Italians; the army group HQ near Rome so as to exert influence over the *Comando Supremo* and the regime. After I refute his objections, Jodl agrees.
>
> Then supper with the Führer, and evening conference. . . He approves my proposal to fight a delaying action in Sicily and to fall back on Italy only when forced to do so, and meanwhile to establish four lines of resistance [across the Italian peninsula] – the first from Cosenza to Taranto, the second at Salerno, the third at Cassino, and the fourth and ultimate line along the Apennines. . .

One last attempt was made to force the Italians to come clean about their intentions. Hitler ordered Rommel and Jodl to confront the Italians with a putative plan for a joint defence of Italy and to study their reactions. The meeting took place at Bologna on August 15. General Roatta took the news that Rommel would command all German forces north of the Apennines very badly. He icily submitted a map which would in effect deploy the Italian divisions in a barrier across the peninsula, where they could trap the Germans in the south; the motive was clear. Rommel wrote a twenty-page memorandum on the Bologna meeting. Jodl more succinctly cabled the OKW that evening: 'Grounds for suspicion remain undiminished.' Hitler ordered the evacuation of Sicily to begin.

ONE FURTHER episode illustrates Hitler's abysmal hatred of the Italian House of Savoy. He had invited King Boris of Bulgaria to the Wolf's Lair for an informal visit. They lunched together for three hours on August 14 and again the next day. In the intervals Boris amused himself with his hobby, clambering around a locomotive's footplate – Hitler's staff had thoughtfully provided one with steam ready raised on a nearby siding. According to Franz von Sonnleitner, Boris at last agreed to allow his intact divisions to be used against the Russians: 'We were all very contented,' wrote Sonnleitner, 'when Boris left.' Hitler himself accompanied the king to Rastenburg airfield.

Two weeks later King Boris was struck down by a disease of mysterious suddenness. The German air attaché in Sofia provided immediate air transport for the king's German physician Dr. Seitz, on August 24. Seitz reported however that the king was dying. He provisionally diagnosed a bladder disease, and Hitler sent the Reich's finest doctor, Professor Hans Eppinger, from Vienna to assist. Complications set in, and the famous neu-

rologist Professor Maximilian de Crinis was flown in from Berlin on the twenty-eighth. But at 4:20 p.m. the king died. The king's Italian wife Giovanna would not permit an autopsy, but Eppinger noticed that the royal corpse's lower extremities had turned black – a phenomenon he had seen only once before, after the Greek prime minister, Ioannis Metaxas, had swallowed poison in January 1941. Upon the German doctors' return, Hitler instructed his minister of justice to discharge them from their oath of secrecy and to question them; they were unanimous that the cause of death was an exotic snake-poison. It was the characteristic 'Balkan death,' as Eppinger put it.

Hitler was disconsolate at the loss of this stabilising influence in Bulgaria. He ordered a powerful delegation to attend the state funeral. His instinct told him that the House of Savoy lay behind the murder: was it not suspicious that Princess Mafalda, the king's sister-in-law and daughter of the king of Italy – wife of Prince Philipp of Hesse and 'blackest carrion in the Italian royal house' (as Hitler luridly described her) – had spent some weeks in Sofia quite recently?

From the Forschungsamt he learned that Prince Philipp had recently dictated groups of cyphers over the telephone to Mafalda, evidently employing some private code. To arrest him however would be to alarm the Italian monarchy too soon. So Hitler invited the prince to be his guest at headquarters, treated him with continued hospitality – and told his guards not to let him out again.

On the evening of August 21 Hitler invited his staff movie cameraman, Lieutenant Walter Frentz, whose birthday it was, to take supper with him. Frentz had just returned from another tour of the Atlantic Wall project, and he mentioned that several guerrilla bomb incidents had marred his visit to Denmark. Hitler ordered General Jodl to obtain daily reports on this 'guerrilla war' in the future.

A few days later – alarmed by the reports the OKW commander, General von Hanneken, was now submitting – Hitler ordered Ribbentrop to issue an ultimatum to the Danish government; it was to declare a state of emergency and introduce draconian measures against guerrilla activities.

As Hitler evidently anticipated, the ultimatum was rejected, and the Danish forces were disarmed early on August 29 almost without a shot being fired; the king and crown prince were placed under house arrest, and the Danish navy was surrendered to Admiral Dönitz. Hitler now ordered Himmler to deport all Jews from Denmark; several thousand escaped to

Sweden, but 477 were rounded up and taken to the Theresienstadt concentration camp in October.

Hitler's trust in Himmler and the SS was now absolute: Germany would never forget the heroism of the Waffen SS divisions which had recaptured Kharkov in March and dispelled the gloom of Stalingrad. Himmler's pocket diary shows him attending Hitler's conferences with increasing regularity; sometimes Hitler phoned him in person; they lunched together two or three times a week, or dined far into the night. Hitler did not doubt the precariousness of his position. Events in Italy had sparked off a mood of defeatism in Germany. Himmler – in a secret January 1944 speech – epitomised the mood thus: 'So, a Duce can be arrested. Very interesting. And many a rash mind poses the question, Why not here in Germany too! Then we'll be rid of the Nazis, we can make peace with the British, the British will guarantee Germany against Russia – and everything will be all right!'

Throughout August 1943 the Reichsführer and Gestapo rounded up German dissidents. The more able-bodied, 'not more than 150 in all' Himmler boasted, were put to the guillotine. The most dangerous group was, however, left at large: in March 1943, Himmler had warned Hitler that certain nuclei of ex-ministers and dismissed army generals were beginning to plot a coup d'état. There was General Franz Halder, whom he code-named 'Reservist' ('As he's holding himself in reserve to take over the German army,' Himmler sneered in August 1944); and he was also keeping watch on the former finance minister, Johannes Popitz, under the code name 'Baroque.' For months Popitz had been trying to establish contact with Himmler through an intermediary, a lawyer called Carl Langbehn. The lawyer explained to the crafty Reichsführer that the war must be stopped, peace made with Britain, and the Führer pensioned off. Himmler at once told Hitler: 'I'll bump him off right now – what cheek!' – meaning Popitz. But Hitler laughed. 'No, not that. Hear him out first. Send for him, and if in that conversation he puts his cards straight on the table, *then* you can arrest him!' Himmler sent for Popitz three days later and secretly recorded the entire conversation on magnetic wire. Gestapo officials stood by to arrest the man, but Popitz would not be lured out of his reserve and he left the building a free man.

Once Frick had proposed to Hitler setting up a Reich Senate of academics and clergy as a supreme constitutional body – the very image, Hitler now remarked, of the Fascist Grand Council that had just proven Musso-

lini's undoing. Hitler appointed Frick Protector of Bohemia and Moravia in Neurath's place. At the same time he upgraded Karl-Hermann Frank's powers as deputy protector in Prague, so as to vest absolute authority in him. As Göring later disarmingly put it: 'It became increasingly clear that the Führer was turning more and more to the exponents of brute force.'

JODL'S ACCOUNT of Rommel's Bologna meeting of August 15 had convinced Hitler that Italy was about to defect. He instructed Rommel that if necessary he was to 'make ruthless use of his weaponry to get his way.' Things were already getting ugly. On August 17 an Italian general forced a German unit at gunpoint to hand over American parachutists they had taken prisoner in northern Italy. Late the next day Hitler issued a further secret directive to the southern front, beginning thus: 'In some form or other it is expected that Italy will surrender to enemy pressure sooner or later.' He ordered Vietinghoff's Tenth Army to move three mechanised divisions to the coastal area most in danger of invasion, the stretch between Naples and Salerno. The Italians had now assembled nearly seven divisions around Rome, leaving only one division to defend all Apulia.

Two formidable Allied convoys were sighted by agents, passing eastward through the Strait of Gibraltar. One was reported laden with seventy thousand troops and their equipment. Hitler deduced that the enemy must be about to invade the continental mainland. The admiralty agreed.

Things were coming to a head. Early on August 26 Himmler alerted Hitler to an agent's urgent message from Rome: 'Badoglio has asked Britain for an armistice regardless of conditions. The British have promised to reply by Saturday, August 28, 1943, and want to send in a strong convoy meantime with the most up-to-date weapons to enable temporary resistance to be offered to German troops.' Meanwhile, there were fresh clashes between the Italians and Rommel's troops in the north, as the latter now entered Slovenia with Tiger tank regiments.

Late on August 30 the OKW issued a revised directive for 'Axis,' under which Italy was to be occupied by German forces. When that code word was issued, the Germans were to disarm the Italians, seize their weapons and prepare a retreat northward to Rome. Northern Italy was to be pacified and a Fascist government restored. The retreating troops were to burn and destroy 'as though on enemy soil.' Corsica was to be held. Field Marshal Weichs would assume command of the entire south-eastern front, the Balkans. All this while, the Italian generals and government were expressing

pained surprise that Hitler showed so little faith in their loyalty to the Axis cause. Hitler had replaced his two credulous diplomats in Rome – Mackensen and Rintelen – with two from a more sceptical school: Ambassador Rudolf Rahn and Colonel Rudolf Toussaint. Their dispatches spoke a more realistic language about the future.

From late September 2 on, it was plain that an invasion of southern Italy was imminent. At six A.M. the next day one hundred landing craft disgorged two divisions of the British Eighth Army on the southernmost point of the peninsula, at Reggio di Calabria. The Italians imposed a virtual news blackout and offered little resistance themselves. In the afternoon a British message was decoded: 'Six hundred prisoners taken, including two colonels; no minefields, no Germans, civilians are friendly.'

The German naval commander in Italy, Admiral Wilhelm Meendsen-Bohlken, reported that day that Badoglio's government could be trusted. The report blandly assured Hitler: 'They are stifling anything redolent of peace demonstrations.'

The Italian navy in particular had promised him that there could be no question of 'a repetition of Scapa Flow or Toulon' with their fleet. Hitler marvelled at the admiral's gullibility. When Romania's Marshal Antonescu visited that day, Hitler told him he was convinced that the king of Italy was now dealing with the enemy.

The Führer begged Antonescu to be on guard against poisoning attempts, and he repeated this same warning to Rommel on September 4. 'I am to have an audience of the [Italian] king shortly,' recorded the field marshal. 'The Führer has forbidden me to eat anything there, out of concern for my health.' In his diary that day Rommel entered:

> The Führer makes a tranquil, confident impression. He wants to send me to see the king of Italy soon.
>
> He agrees to my Italian campaign plan, which envisages a defence along the coastline, despite Jodl's objections (which don't hold water in a modern war). – The Führer considers it still too early for the countries of Europe to unite.
>
> 8:30 P.M. Dinner with the Führer. Previously with Jodl. Führer advises me to take care when I see the king.

It was at about this time that after one war conference, Hitler was observed sketching with his coloured pencils a new flag for a Republican Italy.

'The first one to lose his nerve will lose the war as well,' Hitler had said to Antonescu.

During August, while Hitler was reinforcing his strength in the Mediterranean, Stalin had cleverly exploited the strategic impasse to mount a series of attacks all along the eastern front. Manstein repeatedly warned that Stalin's objective was to cut off his own Army Group South and Kleist's Army Group A in the Crimea and Kuban bridgehead, and he demanded that either at least twelve new divisions be provided him to reinforce his northern flank, or that Hitler permit him to withdraw from the coal-bearing Donets region. This would shorten his front by one-third and thus provide him with the reserves he needed.

At seven A.M. on August 27, Hitler flew down to his old headquarters in the Ukraine; Manstein told him that without reinforcements he could not prevent the Russians from sooner or later breaking through to the Dnieper River. Hitler stayed five hours, listened calmly, promised to transfer divisions to Manstein from Kluge's Army Group Centre and from Army Group North; then he flew back to East Prussia. His promise to Manstein was broken within one day, for Kluge had his own enemy breakthrough to contend with; he arrived at Hitler's headquarters the next day and talked the Führer out of further weakening Army Group Centre.

While Hitler hesitated, Stalin did not. On the Sea of Azov, General Hollidt's new Sixth Army was breached and a corps briefly encircled. On his own responsibility, Manstein told Hollidt to fall back – the first irrevocable step toward abandoning the rich Donets Basin. Hitler had no choice but to allow Manstein to withdraw. He ordered him to destroy anything of value to the enemy first. This decision was announced to Manstein at the Wolf's Lair on September 3.

The next day Hitler also authorised the withdrawal of the Seventeenth Army from the Kuban bridgehead across the Strait of Kerch. As recently as June, engineers had put into service an overhead cable railway across the four-mile-wide strait; it was capable of transporting a thousand tons of supplies a day from the Crimea to the bridgehead. For many months Stalin had confronted the bridgehead with over fifty divisions, but now he was no longer impressed by Hitler's ability to mount a new offensive and was deploying them elsewhere; liquidating the bridgehead would release nearly four divisions. Hitler ordered Kleist to speed up the fortification of the Crimea.

How he longed for the autumn rains to return!

THUS THE eighth of September 1943 arrived – a hot and airless day. Hitler had slept only four hours. He was awakened at 5:45 A.M. because he had to fly down to Zaporozh'ye to see Manstein again. Over fifty-five Russian divisions were now confronting his forces. The Russians had again pierced the Sixth Army, and at the frail weld between Manstein's and Kluge's army groups the dam had finally burst and the enemy was pouring westward toward Kiev and the middle reaches of the Dnieper.

Here in the Ukraine, an inexplicable restlessness gnawed at Hitler. Was it Italy? On the seventh he had suggested unravelling the tangled Italian web 'by brute force.' Here at least he could take the initiative by putting a blunt ultimatum to Badoglio: either provide a satisfactory explanation for his machinations, or face the immediate consequences. The ultimatum was being drafted at this moment. Now, after barely ninety minutes at Manstein's headquarters, Hitler could stand the uncertainty no longer. He was airborne at 12:45 P.M. – leaving Russian soil for what was to prove the last time – and was back at the Wolf's Lair in conference by five.

Again his sixth sense had served him well. He found that two hours earlier an SS teletype had arrived – a four-day-old report by an agent on the Italian air staff. The man had just overheard Ambrosio's *comando supremo* secretly telephoning this message to the air force: 'Italian peace proposals by and large accepted by the British. We are trying to iron out difficulties raised by Americans.' Despite this, the king of Italy had just assured Ambassador Rahn that his country would fight on, and Badoglio had told the envoy the same: 'Germany has still to learn what an Italian general's word of honour means!'

WORN OUT by events, Hitler dozed in his room for half an hour. Almost at once he was awakened. The BBC had just announced Italy's 'unconditional surrender.' Shortly afterward General Eisenhower broadcast a proclamation from Algiers radio: 'The armistice was signed by my representative and representatives of Marshal Badoglio and takes force immediately.'

Jodl put in a direct telephone call to his generals in Rome. Both were at that very moment seeing General Roatta – and the army's Chief of Staff was hotly refuting the Allied broadcasts as wicked libels on the honour of Italy. Consternation gripped Hitler's staff, as Roatta's denial still robbed him of the freedom to issue the code word 'Axis.' Jodl drafted a monition alerting all commands, but before it could be teletyped, Ribbentrop learned

from Rome that at 7:15 p.m. Badoglio had confessed that Italy had indeed surrendered. The OKW acted like lightning. At 7:50 p.m. Jodl's adjutant telephoned the code word to the south. As Jodl later pointed out, even the two hours' advance notice given by the BBC had given Germany some opportunity to issue orders before the Italians could react.

It was unlikely that the Italian fleet could be prevented from escaping; at 8:45 p.m. Admiral Cunningham was heard radioing the Italian ships to run for the nearest Allied haven. The German admiralty commented: 'The consequences of this vile act of treachery – unique in military history – will be very different from what Italy has hoped. The countryside will become a battlefield between the betrayed allies of yesterday and the ruthless conquerors of today.'

Alas, no record of Hitler's conversations that evening remains. Long after dawn the group disbanded. As Prince Philipp of Hesse – son-in-law of the king of Italy – went out, the chief of Hitler's police bodyguard arrested him; he was consigned that same night to the Gestapo at Königsberg, and he remained in a concentration camp until the war was over.

Relieved that the clouds of uncertainty had been dispelled, Hitler fell into bed at five a.m. to snatch five hours' rest after a working day of twenty-three. He alone had steadfastly predicted this treachery.



Official press photo of Hitler congratulating Himmler on his appointment as minister of the interior in 1943 (AUTHOR'S COLLECTION)

Feelers to Stalin

While in the North Hitler's troops stood their ground, the Russian offensive swept over Novorossisk, Bryansk, Poltava, Smolensk, Dnepropetrovsk; and on November 6, Kiev itself fell. Army Groups South and Centre had fallen back on the new 'Panther' line – primarily along the Dnieper River – but Stalin rapidly built up fresh bridgeheads here as well. Hitler stormed at General Zeitzler, his Chief of Staff: 'You see! I gave you permission to build the Dnieper line you were always asking for, and where is it? The troops found nothing ready for them!'

That much was true. But blame also attached to Hitler for his stubborn determination to keep the fighting as far from the Reich as possible. During 1942 he had belatedly encouraged the army to fortify the more stable sectors of the front using labour impressed from the local Russian population. Kluge had done little, causing Hitler to exclaim – after the failure of 'Citadel' – 'If only he had done some construction here, instead of talking so much hot air and making explanations!'

Zeitzler had been loath to allow Speer's Todt Organisation engineers to direct the East Wall project. Besides, the architect Speer had displayed in the Atlantic Wall project little of the inspiration and energy that distinguished the engineer Fritz Todt's work on the 1938 West Wall. Speer had his eye on more ambitious heights. His redesignation by Hitler early in September as minister of armaments and war production led to authoritative rumours that Speer saw himself as a future minister of war.

Parallel to the high-level bickering over the construction of the East Wall ran a debilitating argument over the precise route it should follow. Zeitzler had always favoured following the Dnieper, as its western bank was a steep cliff towering often 150 feet above the eastern plains. In summer the river was a raging flood sometimes two miles wide and virtually

unbridgeable. But it was over a hundred miles behind the lines, and Hitler had rejected such a fatalistic view of the future. Now he had no choice.

On August 12, Zeitzler ordered the army groups to start building the East Wall. It was to run from the Kerch peninsula in the south to Lake Peipus and Narva in the north. The OKW, the Luftwaffe, and the navy raised protests about this route. One of 'Barbarossa's' original objects had been to push the closest Russian bomber airfields out of striking range of the Reich, while at the same time providing airfields from which the German bombers could devastate the Urals industries. In addition, abandoning the Black Sea naval base of Novorossisk to the enemy would sour Germany's political relations with Turkey, Romania, and Bulgaria. If Zaporozh'ye could not be defended, then the loss of the hydroelectric power station there would make it impossible to operate the blast furnaces at Dnepropetrovsk. Thus Speer's plan to establish a munitions industry in the Ukraine would collapse.

The naval staff also objected. An East Wall built from Velikiye Luki to Lake Peipus and Narva meant the final loss of Leningrad; the Russian fleet could again maraud in the Gulf of Finland and jeopardise the German navy's training programmes in the Baltic; and the important oil-shales in Estonia would have to be written off. But Zeitzler wanted a defensible East Wall built by the end of October, and on September 4 he issued orders to the army groups to that effect: east of the line, the population and property along a twenty-five-mile-wide belt was to be ruthlessly exploited for the project; a swath of total destruction in this zone must make it impossible for any enemy to survive there. 'The outlying area must become a desert.'

Field Marshal Georg von Küchler, commander of Army Group North, came a week later to protest to Hitler. It would be like losing a battle, he said. His men had gained and valiantly defended their present lines at Leningrad in two years of bloody fighting; they would not like seeing the graves of thousands of their comrades abandoned to the enemy without good cause. Zeitzler would not accept his arguments, but Hitler was clearly loath to act prematurely. As so often before, he postponed a decision.

A SPLIT between west and east seemed inevitable. During August 1943 Ribbentrop had again extended feelers to the Russians. First he had sent Rudolf Likus to Stockholm to seek clues as to Stalin's peace terms. Then, in mid-August, he had ordered his subaltern, Dr. Peter Kleist, to pick up his earlier threads with a certain non-Aryan Baltic businessman in Stockholm, Edgar Klauss, known to have contacts with the Soviet embassy there.

Klauss claimed that the former Russian ambassador in Berlin, Vladimir Dekanozov, was coming on September 12 and hoped to meet a German negotiator then; Kleist reported this to Ribbentrop at the Wolf's Lair on the tenth. Hitler proved more receptive this time; they went over to a map, and he sketched in a possible demarcation line to be agreed on with Stalin. But during the night he changed his mind and told Ribbentrop he would have to think it over more carefully. In conversation with Goebbels on the ninth he had shown a greater affinity for the British than for Stalin; Hitler decided to wait until the Allies had been dealt the kind of military reverse that, in Hitler's calculus, must always precede a secret offer of armistice.

Operation 'Axis' had been smoothly completed as planned. Rome had been seized. The disarming of Italy's armed forces was proceeding rapidly. In the Aegean, Rhodes and Corfu there was still fighting, however, and late on the tenth an ultimatum was issued to all Italian troops to lay down their arms; otherwise their commanders would be shot as francs-tireurs.

Often the Italians gave their arms to the partisans – particularly to Tito's guerrillas in Dalmatia; wherever this was found to have occurred, Hitler had their officers stood before German firing squads and the men deported to the eastern front to swell his army's labour force.

Bent on surrendering their ships to the Allies, the Italian fleet had sailed on the ninth on a pretext: Luftwaffe bombers equipped with guided missiles sank the battleship *Roma* and injured her sister ship *Italia;* the rest defected. In Nice, a German officer was killed by an Italian hand-grenade, the railroad garrison was put before a firing squad in revenge.

Badoglio had done his utmost to wound Germany. When the American Fifth Army's invasion at Salerno, south of Naples, began on September 9, the Germans realised from American radio messages that their minefields had been betrayed to the enemy. An Italian naval lieutenant put the fuel dumps in Naples to the torch. Meanwhile Badoglio, Ambrosio, and Roatta had fled to the enemy, accompanied by the king and Crown Prince Umberto. With grim satisfaction Hitler read the latest intercept of an Anthony Eden telephone call from London to Winston Churchill in Washington: Eden was indignant that Umberto was refusing to accept an English officer as aide-de-camp. As for the Duce, Badoglio had promised to relinquish him to the enemy. Hitler's heart went out to him, wherever he now was.

'Understandably' – Hitler was broadcasting to his people late on September 10, surrounded by Himmler, Göring, and his staff – 'I am grieved by the sight of the unique injustice inflicted on this man [Mussolini] and the

degrading treatment meted out to him, whose only care these last twenty years and more has been for his people, as though he were a common criminal. I was and am glad to call this great and loyal man my friend.' It sounded very much like an obituary for Mussolini.

Hitler had appointed a National Government under Alessandro Pavolini to salvage what was left of Fascism in Italy; SS General Karl Wolff was attached as police 'adviser' to Pavolini. North of the Apennines, Italy was now officially 'German occupied territory,' with a military governor; to the south was the 'operations zone.' Kesselring was ordered on the twelfth to defeat the American divisions at Salerno if he could; if he could not, he was to fall back on Rome, blocking the enemy's advance by destroying roads, bridges, tunnels, and railway installations as he retreated.

On the eleventh the OKW ordered that everything of value in the south – goods and raw materials – was to be stripped and shipped north 'on behalf of the new Fascist government.' Speer persuaded Hitler to empower him to dismantle precious machine-tools from anywhere in Italy 'in danger of air attack' and ship them back to the Reich. Mussolini's exit was therefore something of a relief. As Goebbels wrote: 'We must judge it all from the standpoint of expediency.' On the twelfth, two of Hitler's frontier gauleiters came for lunch – Franz Hofer from the Tyrol and Friedrich Rainer from Carinthia. Hitler signed two additional decrees subjecting large provinces of northern Italy to their gau administration: thus the future Germany was intended to reach the frontiers of Venetia.

AT WHAT stage the startling news of Mussolini's rescue reached the Wolf's Lair is uncertain. At two P.M. the fallen Duce was already free. Speer suggested that under the circumstances the three decrees should be cancelled, but Hitler would not hear of it and changed their date from September 12 to 13, so that there could be no doubt that the Duce's liberation had not in the least affected his decisions on Italy's future. At 9:45 P.M., as he was supping with Himmler, an SS general telephoned from Vienna that Mussolini had just arrived there with Otto Skorzeny. According to a manservant, Hitler exclaimed: 'That'll show the British that I never turn my back on a friend – that I'm a man of my word. They'll say, "He's a friend indeed!"'

Two days later, Hitler drove to the local airfield to meet the plane bringing the tired Italian dictator up from Munich. Mussolini was dressed in a simple dark blue suit; he was very different from the Mussolini who had conferred with Hitler in past years. He protested that he was still ill, and

for a while Hitler believed that Mussolini had been poisoned too; but Morell took him under his scrutiny and found nothing wrong with him.

Hitler expected him to exact a terrible revenge on Count Ciano, Dino Grandi, and all who had betrayed the cause of Fascism in July. A few days later Edda Mussolini, Ciano's wife, who had been brought to Germany, appealed to Hitler for enough Spanish currency to enable her to emigrate with the count through Spain to South America; but Hitler ruled that he was to remain in German hands. Besides, his agents had intercepted a threatening letter from Edda to her father: if the Duce did not take her out of Germany, this said, she would cause the name of her father to be cursed throughout the world. For hours Hitler paced the map room with Goebbels, speculating on what Edda's hold over her father could be. Hitler advised the former dictator to put his family's affairs in order.

To Ribbentrop's astonishment, Hitler also remarked to Mussolini that he planned a compromise with Stalin. But the next day he changed his mind again: 'You know, Ribbentrop,' he said, 'if I come to terms with Russia today, I would be at her throat again tomorrow – it's in my nature.'

Torn between Stalin and the West, when Goebbels asked if he refused to deal with Churchill on principle, Hitler retorted: 'In politics you can't let personalities and principles stand in your way. It's just that Churchill is inspired by hate, not common sense.' He far preferred to deal with Stalin – but then Stalin could hardly grant the Reich what it demanded in the east.

HITLER HAD now abandoned hope of throwing the American Fifth Army back into the sea at Salerno. Initially the Americans had encountered only the 16th Panzer Division, but Richthofen's rocket-firing fighters and the 88-millimetre guns of an anti-aircraft regiment had wrought havoc on the invasion ships. On the thirteenth two panzer and one panzer-grenadier division began a counterattack, and routed two American divisions. But the attack came under heavy bombardment from Allied warships; the beachhead remained, leaving Hitler's staff only to rejoice at the 'thrashing' meted out to the Americans.

Jodl set their value far below that of Montgomery's seasoned troops. American paratroops were 'usable,' he said, but the rest 'never attack so long as a single gun is left firing from the German lines.' Hitler wrote off the threat of an American invasion elsewhere for many months to come. 'No more invasions for them! They are much too cowardly for that. They only managed the one at Salerno because the Italians gave their blessing.'

The bungling Allied planning comforted him greatly over the next weeks. Why did they not immediately invade the Balkans, where the natives were waiting for them with open arms? Why had they not ventured a bold invasion north of Rome when Badoglio defected?

Italy's defection had greatly profited the Reich in terms of material. No longer did Germany have to feed Italy with coal, oil, and foodstuffs. By the end of September the first 268,000 Italian prisoners had already been transported to the Reich. 'Operation Axis' had also yielded a big haul of Italian weaponry: 449 tanks, 2,000 guns, and 500,000 rifles. The notes taken by one General Staff officer attending the Führer conferences of September 30 reflect Hitler's astonishment at the booty made by his troops in Italy. Göring reported that they had found hundreds of Italian fighter planes.

'How did these cripples manage it?' burst out Hitler. 'The Italians and the Duce,' responded Göring, 'have been deliberately doing the dirty on us for years. They simply squirreled away raw materials and aircraft. The Duce ought to be shot!' Hitler however felt that it was the king and his generals who were to blame. As for their strategy in southern Italy, he emphasised how vital it was to hold the enemy down there for as long as they could.

'We've got to win time,' he said. 'The enemy are having a pretty thin time themselves: their reserves of manpower and materials are subject to exactly the same limitations as our own, and sooner or later they are bound to get fed up with it. From a certain time onward, the war can't be won by conquering the whole world, but by dragging out the fighting so long that the others get worn out.' Addressing Göring directly he exclaimed, 'Time, time, time!' (Afterward the author of these notes jotted down his own impression of this first meeting with the Führer: 'He looked tired and unwell. He is markedly bowed. From time to time his belief in the propriety of his actions and in ultimate victory did come through. He ought to get rid of his entire entourage, however, as a matter of the utmost urgency.')

Three heavy night raids had been launched against Berlin but these failed to repeat the catastrophe of Hamburg. New freelance night-fighting tactics introduced by fighter ace Colonel Hajo Herrmann were proving effective. Goebbels's timely evacuation order spared the lives of many thousands; in the raid on September 1 only thirteen Berliners died, and in the final raid two nights later, of 346 dead only one was a child. Far worse was however expected: in the big cities painted arrows were to be seen everywhere – telling the people which way to flee if firestorms broke out again.

To the German people the war in the air *was* the Second Front.

By day and night the Allied bombers ranged over Germany, sometimes as far as Danzig or East Prussia. From the newly captured airfields around Foggia in southern Italy they could now reach any target in Austria and the Balkans. The American bombers were heavily armed: eighteen of them, in tight formation, packed 200 heavy machine-guns, a nightmare for attacking fighter planes. Hitler learned that the German fighters had still not been equipped with the 30-millimetre cannon, although he had seen the prototype MK101 demonstrated at Rechlin in July 1939. He now ordered the fighters fitted experimentally with the 50-millimetre antitank gun, to enable them to open fire from well outside the bombers' defensive radius.

The inadequacy of the current fighter armament sorely affected pilot morale, and this in turn was felt by the people. On October 4 the Americans bombed Frankfurt on a brilliant autumn day – their glittering squadrons droning high over the city 'as ours used to, in peacetime.'

Hitler bitterly reproached Göring, saying that his Luftwaffe had lost the confidence of the people: 'Whatever the cost, these mass daylight attacks have got to be stopped.' The Reichsmarschall passed this rebuke on to General Galland. Between them, Göring and Galland brought discipline to the fighter squadrons and inflicted savage wounds on the American bombers in October. In three days' raids up to the tenth the enemy lost 88 bombers and nearly 900 men, and when the Americans attacked the ball-bearing factories at Schweinfurt on October 14, the day fighters brought down 60 and severely damaged 17 more.

Meanwhile, at night the battle ebbed and flowed: on the lakes around Berlin bobbed myriads of metal radar-reflectors to deceive the bombers. Airborne receivers enabled the German night fighters to home in on the bombers' own powerful radar emissions. Their enemies fought back with decoy raids, split raiding forces, and German-speaking broadcasters countermanding the orders transmitted by the German ground controllers. The defenders resorted to unloading fake target flares over the open countryside or they patrolled the enemy airfields, waiting for the bombers to return.

Hitler impatiently demanded fresh raids on Britain's cities. 'Aerial terrorism is only effective as a threat,' he pontificated, 'not in its actual fulfilment. . . How often these last three hundred years have entire cities or great buildings been consumed by flames? The devastation actually works in our favour, because it is creating a body of people with nothing more to lose – people who will therefore fight on with utter fanaticism.'

On October 22, the British generated a second firestorm; it ravaged Kassel, and six thousand citizens died between dusk and dawn.

It made no impression on Hitler, but he intensified his pressure for the secret weapons to terrorise London – the A-4 rocket, the flying bomb, and the multiple-gun battery at Mimoyecques near Calais sinisterly known as the 'High Pressure Pump.' Early in October Hitler dropped a broad hint to Göring that one of the big Allied-occupied cities in southern Italy, like Brindisi or Taranto, should also be stricken by a heavy Luftwaffe night attack. This would remind Germany's other reluctant Allies that allowing the enemy in was no passport to paradise.

THE INCREASING brutalisation of the war showed itself in many ways. Early in October the remaining Jews were deported from Denmark. Himmler evidently also considered the eight thousand Jews in Rome a potential threat to public order; Ribbentrop brought to Hitler an urgent telegram from his consul in Rome reporting that the SS had ordered from Berlin that 'the eight thousand Jews resident in Rome are to be rounded up and brought to upper Italy, where they are to be liquidated.' Again Hitler took a more 'moderate' line. On the ninth Ribbentrop informed Rome that the Führer had directed that the Jews were to be taken to Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria instead, where they were to be held 'as hostages.' Coincidentally, it was at this time that Himmler revealed to his SS *Gruppenführer* (generals) on October 4, and to the Party's gauleiters on October 6, that by the end of 1943 the last Jews in occupied Europe would have been *exterminated*. Speaking to SS generals on October 4, 1943, Himmler praised the toughness of those who had had to carry out the massacre. To the gauleiters he referred to 'the Jewish problem' as the most difficult he had handled. 'The Jews are to be exterminated,' was, he told them, easier said than done. Even where women and children were concerned he, Himmler, had opted for a clear solution. 'I did not consider myself justified in exterminating the menfolk – that is to kill them or have them killed – while leaving their children to grow up and take vengeance on our sons and grandsons. The hard decision had to be taken to make this race disappear from earth.'

That Himmler's intention was to make all his SS generals accessories after the fact to the massacre is strongly suggested by one curious document in his files: a name-by-name list of those who had *not* attended his speech! The magnetic recordings show that he did *not* (yet) claim to be acting on Hitler's orders.

The same gauleiters were Hitler's guests at the Wolf's Lair on October 7; from this point on, he could probably no longer credibly plead ignorance of what his 'faithful Heinrich' had done. The SS stood high in Hitler's esteem that autumn. Without Kaltenbrunner's agents, Mussolini's rescue would have been impossible. Princess Mafalda had also been found and was languishing in a concentration camp – a useful hostage to ensure the good behaviour of the king of Italy.* Himmler had inspired his Waffen SS troops, moreover, with a fanatic's loyalty to Nazi Germany.

Late in October he showed Hitler a passage in a recent letter from a young SS brigadier on the eastern front: 'If the others had not been there, I would so much have liked to tell the Führer how much his soldiers revere him and are devoted to him. Even if his orders sometimes seem merciless or cruel – when the order is, "Hold on to the last man" – one feeling is supreme among the men fighting for their Fatherland with rifles in their hand, that they have as their leader a man second to the Lord God alone.' This was Hermann Fegelein: a few days later Hitler selected him as his liaison officer to Himmler; in June he married Eva Braun's sister; a year later he was facing Hitler's firing squad as a deserter in the ruins of Berlin.

'The Führer is confident,' said Bormann in a secret speech at this time, 'but he is not just an optimist; in fact, he is on principle pessimistic as far as all reports to him are concerned. He no longer believes what is not proven to him. He is sceptical about every cable and dispatch he receives.' Stalin was in a position of consummate strength; and thus he was in a position to dictate to the world. To this Hitler knew only one reply: 'The most important thing is to keep up the fight and never falter, but spy out the enemy's weaknesses and exploit them without the least thought of capitulation or "understanding". . . Who can guarantee that one day a bombshell won't burst among the Allies, and that they will suddenly discover differences they can't plaster over any more? . . .'

When fresh feelers reached Hitler now from Britain, he thrust them aside. On October 15, Himmler's chief of foreign Intelligence, Walter Schellenberg, learned that the British trade chief in Stockholm, David MacEvan, had offered to come secretly to Germany for a conference, ostensibly on economic affairs. Himmler asked Ribbentrop to secure a decision from Hitler. Hitler forbade any consideration of such feelers.

* She would die in the American bombing raid on Buchenwald concentration camp.

One reason for Hitler's rebuff to what seemed to be vague Allied feelers was that under Kesselring's command the campaign in Italy was proceeding far better than he had dared to hope.

Rommel, commanding Army Group B in northern Italy, had prophesied the total loss of southern and central Italy; overawed by this warning, Hitler had refused Kesselring's appeal for two more divisions to be sent by Rommel to the south. With these, Kesselring might have routed the Allies, but even so his defensive success was a setback for Churchill and Roosevelt.

Hitler ordered a line south of Rome, from Gaeta on one coast to Ortona on the other to be fortified and held. Once again Rommel had misjudged.

A year later Hitler recalled: 'In Italy too he predicted our collapse as being just around the corner. It still has not occurred. Events have proved him completely wrong, and thoroughly justified my decision to leave Field Marshal Kesselring there. . . My view is that without optimism you cannot be a military commander.'

To Hitler it was plain that Rommel was still tormented by his defeat in Africa; it would be better to give him another command, far from Italy.

Sent for by Hitler on October 17, Rommel again cut a gloomy figure. A few days later Hitler gave Kesselring a fresh hearing, and on the twenty-eighth he decided in his favour. Rommel would be withdrawn from Italy and given a different assignment – as yet undecided.

ON OCTOBER 23, 1943, the main attack on the Sixth Army's sector of the East Wall, the southernmost portion, began: the next day Melitopol was overrun. Kleist and his commanders lost their nerve. A headlong retreat began. Farther north a gap was torn in the German lines between Dnepropetrovsk and Kremenchug that was to yawn a hundred miles wide within two weeks. Hitler appealed to Marshal Antonescu to rush Romanian divisions to help to stem the Soviet flood. But Antonescu feared for the seven divisions he had already committed to the Crimea, where along with two German divisions over 210,000 troops might any day be cut off from their overland supplies. In a reply received on October 27, the marshal advised Hitler to get out of the Crimea while the going was good.

Hitler demurred. Abandoning the Crimea without a fight would not impress Turkey or Bulgaria, and it would bring Stalin 250 miles closer to the Romanian oil wells and refineries on which the Reich relied. With this in mind, on the day he received Antonescu's reply Hitler summoned Göring, Dönitz, Zeitzler, and Jodl to a special war conference at 4:30 P.M. Zeitzler

was optimistic that the Crimea had enough munitions to survive. Admiral Dönitz agreed that a later seaborne evacuation of the Seventeenth Army from the Crimea would be possible, although the job would be a long one and risky because of the powerful Russian air force. Hitler, Dönitz, and the Reichsmarschall were unanimous in believing that the Crimea must be held, and in the meantime provisioned by sea. Zeitzler 'indicated his agreement.' The records are plain on this score. Four days later the Crimea was cut off.

THE WAR conferences of October 27, 1943, vividly illustrated the complexities of fighting wars on many fronts with dwindling resources. Pitched battles were being fought with Communist insurgents and guerrillas in the Balkans. At night the skies of Europe were angry with bomber engines. Speer needed workers to clear rubble, build factories, and operate machinery; Milch needed manpower for his new aircraft industry. Above all Hitler needed fresh divisions to repair the breaches in the eastern front. In September he had already had to lift the draft-deferment allowed to the sole surviving sons of families.

On October 27, while strolling in the woods around the Wolf's Lair, Göring put in a plea for his aircraft factories to be spared the axe. He gave Hitler a concrete example of the shortage of manpower: Willy Messerschmitt, he said, had bluntly told him that for want of four thousand workers his Me-262 jet would be held up by six months. According to Göring, Hitler 'almost had a heart attack' on hearing this news. In his own lively imagination Hitler had already assigned this jet bomber a key role in stopping any Allied invasion attempt. In his mind's eye he could see the hours of utter chaos on the beaches as Allied landing craft arrived. His own troops would be pinned down in their bunkers by heavy naval and air bombardment; the air would be full of enemy fighters. At this moment his new jet bombers should appear – thundering along the beaches with cannon blazing, hurling bombs at random into the jammed invasion troops, spreading panic and confusion for vital hours until he could bring up his mobile reserves. Göring promised the Führer he would get his jet bombers by May.

Hitler's strategic thinking had undergone a startling change since Italy's defection. Göring portrayed it thus to his generals on October 28: 'In Russia we have won an immense outlying area in which we can resort to flexible tactics,' he said. 'Whether the Russians are at Krivoi Rog or approach a hundred miles closer to us or not is not vital; what is vital, is that by spring at the latest we can muster enough manœuvrability to stand fast in the west

and stop the Second Front before it starts. Only air power can do that. The Führer made this abundantly clear yesterday in Dönitz's presence. The Führer says the jet fighter with bombs will be vital – because it will hurtle at top speed along the beach at just the right moment and hurl its bombs into the throngs forming there.' Göring added, 'I thought to myself, "Who knows if we'll really have the Me-262 by then?"'

If an enemy army ever set foot on French soil, concluded Göring, it would spell the end for Germany; whereas even if every German city was in ruins, the German people would still survive to fight on.

In a wordy report to Hitler, Field Marshal von Rundstedt reached the same conclusion. Any German retreat in the west would provide the enemy with the harbours that he needed, and deprive Germany of her U-boat bases and coastal convoys.

At Hitler's conference on October 30 Jodl supported Rundstedt's main contention that a spring 1944 invasion of France was a certainty, because only the loss of the Ruhr would finally defeat Germany; besides, Churchill would want to neutralise the A-4 missile sites in northern France.

Hitler agreed; indeed, he went further, for he secretly ordered Rundstedt to send a team to reconnoitre a possible second line to be defended along the Somme and Marne rivers down to the Swiss frontier – which implicitly assumed that all of France would be overrun by the enemy.*

He also found a neat solution to the Rommel–Kesselring dilemma.

On November 5 he told Rommel that his army group headquarters staff was to inspect the western coastal defences and suggest how they could be improved, and at the same time to study ways and means of mounting counteroffensives against an enemy lodged in western Europe.

Rommel was piqued by what seemed such an uninspiring mission – far from the limelight in which he had fought his famous battles. He wrote a few days later: 'Nobody knows if the new job is a way of shelving me or not. The Führer said quite the contrary. The envious are legion.'

His admiration for Hitler spurred Rommel on. On November 8, 1943 the Führer delivered his annual address to the Old Guard in Munich's Löwenbräu beer cellar. 'What power he radiates!' wrote Rommel in intoxication. 'What faith and confidence he inspires in his people!'

* This order again dispels the legend that Hitler was loath to allow timely provision for retreats. The proposed line still left Germany with the French provinces Hitler had decided in 1940 to annex.

'And So It Will Be, Mein Führer!'

In four years, the wheel had turned full circle. Throughout the winter of 1943–44 the western front would remain Hitler's constant preoccupation as he devoured Intelligence reports and pored over aerial photographs, trying to deduce where the Allies would set foot in Europe – and when. More than once he was heard to exclaim that if the Allies established a beachhead, the war was lost for Germany. On November 3, 1943 he underlined this in his Directive Number 51:

> Now the danger in the east remains, but an even greater one is emerging in the west: the Anglo-American invasion! The sheer vastness of the eastern spaces allows us to countenance even a major loss of territory if the worse comes to the worst, without it striking fatally at Germany's vital arteries.
>
> Not so the west! . . . I can therefore no longer tolerate the weakening of the west in favour of other theatres of war.

Hitler expected the enemy to land near the A-4 rocket sites and the V-1 flying-bomb catapults currently being erected along the Channel coast by armies of French labourers. But the political and strategic profit to the Allies of an invasion of Denmark meant that its shoreline would also have to be defended. The Balkans cried out for reinforcements too. The Italian collapse had created pandemonium there. Hitler's attempts to bolster the Poglavnik's tottering government in Croatia failed, even though the country now regained the Dalmatian coastline it had lost in 1941 to Italy.

Several times during September and October Hitler conferred with his generals and ministers on the Balkan problem. Field Marshal von Weichs, his Commander in Chief there, reported that while an Allied invasion was

unlikely before the spring, 'the most dangerous enemy is Tito.' The partisan commander had a hundred thousand men under arms. In his diary Weichs wrote:

> The grim partisan situation puts a completely different complexion on things. Not that you can speak of 'partisans' any more – under Tito, a powerful Bolshevik army has arisen, rigidly led, acting on directives from Moscow, moving from strength to strength, and growing deadlier every day. It has strong British support. Tito's present objective is to break into Serbia and then defeat the nationalist guerrillas led by D[raža] M[ihailović].

The Italian withdrawal had left a vacuum in Albania, where there was only one German battalion to defend the coastline. If the Allies had landed even one regiment here, they could have controlled the country in two weeks.

Hitler's response to this situation was a significant political realignment. Supported by Weichs and Kaltenbrunner he decided to enlist the aid of the Serbs. On October 29 he vested in Ribbentrop's very able special envoy to the Balkans, Hermann Neubacher, sweeping powers to fight communism there; in particular he could make contact with Mihailović if need be. The Serbs were tempted with the restoration of Montenegro, the removal of Göring's notoriously corrupt economic envoy Neuhausen, and special favours for Prime Minister Milan Nedić – a man whom Hitler found he could trust and like.

One thing was plain: Hitler could not abandon the strategically important Balkan peninsula. Thus he ordered its defence to be tightened along the cordon of islands from the Peloponnese and Crete to Rhodes. Kos was taken in October; and on November 11 a modest German force landed on the island of Leros, held by ten thousand British and Italian troops, and recaptured it in five days' bloody fighting. Samos was taken on the twenty-second, and thus the whole Dodecanese returned to German control, one of the last German victories under Hitler's dictatorship.

Hitler hated the Balkans! 'If the British said Germany's job will be to keep the Balkans in order,' he said in an illuminating aside at one war conference now, 'we'd be busy for the next thirty years – marching in and out and back again, banging their heads together and getting out again.'

From Himmler's Intelligence sources Hitler knew that the British were applying powerful pressure on Turkey to abandon her neutrality. Himmler's

principal source was 'Cicero' – an Albanian manservant employed by Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen, the British ambassador in Ankara – who had been equipped by the German police attaché L. G. Moyzisch with a Leica camera, skeleton keys, and large sums of Turkish currency. In return, he was secretly photographing all the British ambassador's papers during the hour or so that the diplomat bathed and breakfasted.

Once Moyzisch was recalled to Berlin and closely questioned about Cicero – who had by now supplied eighty films of top secret British documents. Moyzisch confirmed that this agent was indubitably authentic.

He hurried back to Ankara on November 9, as the British ambassador was due back from a meeting in Cairo, where Eden had just spent three days talking with the Turkish foreign minister. By the tenth, Ribbentrop already had Cicero's dispatch. 'In Cairo Eden has demanded Turkish airfields for fighter operations in view of the precarious British military situation in the Aegean.' The Turkish foreign minister refused to discuss Eden's demand.

Papen himself lunched with Hitler at the Wolf's Lair on the seventeenth. Next day German Intelligence sources in Ankara – not Cicero this time – reported that Eden had informed the British ambassador that he had formed a bad impression of the Russian army: it seems to be in confusion and 'at the end of its tether.'

Hitler hoped that Stalin's army would not last much longer. 'We must not think of it as some kind of mediæval giant that gets stronger every time it topples to the ground,' he rebuked his generals. 'One day its strength must also fail.'

On November 1, 1943 Russian troops again landed in the north and east Crimea but they were held at bay. On the third, General Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army was convincingly breached; the city of Kiev fell, and the Russian advance reached Fastoff, forty miles to the south-west, before grinding to a halt on the seventh. Hitler sacked General Hoth, calling him this 'Jeremiah.' Afterward, he was given details on the cancer of 'defeatism' spreading among Hoth's soldiers. 'His men have only just found the courage to report all this to me,' complained Hitler weeks later.

Zeitzler commented, 'Any army is the image of its commander.' Hitler agreed. This was why he admired such Party faithfuls as Koch, Sauckel, and Ley – gauleiters who had in their time converted Communist Gaue into Nazi Party strongholds. 'The good Gaue were always under the good gauleiters.'

He was convinced that it was the same in the army. The rot had now set in. The security service, which censored soldiers' letters home, reported that the men no longer believed in victory.

Himmler felt that Manstein was at the bottom of the eastern front's defeatism; when Hitler sent for him on November 7 it was widely believed the field marshal would be retired. Instead, Hitler insisted that Manstein prepare a thrust from the bridgehead at Nikopol toward the Crimea. First the situation south-west of Kiev had to be restored. Sepp Dietrich's Life Guards began the attack on the fifteenth, recaptured the city of Zhitomir, then slid to a halt in the mire, after killing 20,000 enemy troops and destroying or capturing 603 tanks, 300 guns, and 1,200 antitank weapons. 'Where will it ever end!' wrote Goebbels. 'The Soviets have reserves of which we never dreamed in even our most pessimistic estimates.'

On the northern front, squabbles between Küchler and Kluge prevented their adjacent army groups from co-ordinating their counterattack at Nevel, whose recapture would block the enemy's further advance on Latvia. On November 8, Kluge reached his objectives, but Küchler refused to attack the next morning as arranged, and Kluge had to retire to his opening position. With more than a little truth Hitler complained: 'The whole catastrophe of Nevel can be blamed on the petty selfishness of the two army group commanders.'

In mid-November Hitler discussed with his political advisers the possibility of recruiting more Estonians and Latvians for the defence of their native soil, but Rosenberg pointed out that unless the Baltic states' autonomy was assured, they would be unwilling to spill their own blood for the German cause. Hitler 'was inwardly opposed to making such far-reaching concessions in difficult times,' Rosenberg wrote afterward.

Hitler preferred to drain his own industrial labour force. Milch had himself vowed to him that he could, given the chance, 'round up 2,000,000 men from the army's rear for the battlefront within three weeks'; he complained that of the 8,000,000 German soldiers barely 260,000 were actually on the eastern front. Hitler agreed there was an imbalance. But Göring felt himself so vulnerable because of his sinking prestige that at a conference on November 24 he actually declared that he was convinced the Luftwaffe had a large number of men to spare. Three days later Hitler signed a command for 1,000,000 men to be extracted from the Wehrmacht's 'fat' and sent to the front line; the practical result, sadly recorded by Schmundt some months

later, was a disappointment: 'Unhappily it has not been a big success.' He added: 'No use was made of the penal provisions laid down by the Führer. Instead of 1,000,000 men only 400,000 were extracted.'

Göring's prestige was sinking ever lower because Berlin had now begun to suffer. Night after night up to a thousand British bombers assaulted the capital. After the first big raid on November 22, 1943, the government quarter was in ruins. For days on end the city had no telephones, gas, water, or electric power. The Alkett factory, where most of Hitler's self-propelled assault guns were made, was devastated. On some nights of this series of raids over three thousand people died, but the Berliners proved as tough as the people of Hamburg in July, and of London three years before. In London, some newspapers claimed that a million had died in Berlin and that the whole city was in ruins; for tactical reasons, Goebbels was careful not to deny these claims.

Revenge, he reasoned, would soon be theirs. Under Himmler's control, slave labourers were toiling to complete an impregnable underground factory in the Harz Mountains for the manufacture and assembly of the A-4 rocket. Allied bombers had destroyed the first big launching silo at Watten, in north-west France, before it was complete; now Hitler accepted the recommendation of Speer's engineers that a new site be chosen at nearby Wizernes. A million-ton dome of concrete would be emplaced on the edge of a chalk quarry first, then the missile-launching complex excavated beneath it. Hitler was 'unconvinced it would ever be completed,' but his scepticism was dispelled by high-pressure salesmanship from the Peenemünde team, who adroitly covered up the backwardness of the A-4 missile itself.

Late in October, as Hitler was being assured that the A-4 would be operational by the end of 1943, the Luftwaffe's new Chief of Staff, General Günther Korten, had interrupted: 'We are aiming at that date too' – meaning the flying bomb. But the A-4 was running into problems. Speer learned on November 8 that 'the research is not as complete as the development team would have people believe.' Nobody told Hitler; that same day in Munich he was proclaiming: 'Our hour of revenge is nigh!' The Luftwaffe's flying bomb had meanwhile gone into mass production at Volkswagen's Fallersleben factory; but it too was plagued by production faults, and the assembly line halted in November. Despite this 96 special catapult sites were erected by tens of thousands of French workers and Todt engineers

along the Channel coast facing England. They would be ready by mid-December 1943, and the two giant launching bunkers would be operational in March.

Inspecting the Luftwaffe's latest secret equipment at Insterburg airfield with Göring on November 26, Hitler asked an engineer when the flying bomb would be ready. The man replied, 'By the end of March!'

Hitler fell abruptly silent, as the date was the latest he had yet been told. Regardless of these setbacks, on December 15 he instructed Jodl that the reprisal attack on London was to begin on February 15, preferably on a foggy forenoon with a barrage of as many missiles as possible.

The delays however multiplied. Jodl wrote in his diary after seeing Hitler on December 25: 'A-4 and [flying bomb] are dawdling.' By that time the American bomber force had diverted its attentions to the 96 catapult launching sites for the V-1 in France; soon 73 had been destroyed, but now this mattered little, for a new system of prefabricated launchers had superseded them and the 96 were little more than decoys. Hitler drew much comfort from the fact. 'Obviously the things are getting on their nerves. If they were to start erecting such things and we knew they were for wiping out Berlin, then we'd get nervous too and set *our* Luftwaffe on *them.*'

Meanwhile, the Reichsmarschall had sworn to Hitler that within two weeks the Luftwaffe would bomb London. He left for France to command the operation in person. Not until January 22, however, was a fleet of 462 aircraft assembled for the attack. After the first raid the British gloatingly announced that only thirty bombers had found their way to London. The wretched Heinkel 177 had suffered heavy losses. 'That rattletrap is quite the worst junk ever manufactured,' lamented Hitler. 'It's a flying Panther' – referring to the equally paralytic tank – 'and the Panther is the crawling Heinkel!'

Hitler refused to believe that less than three hundred or four hundred planes had reached London. 'You've got agents,' he challenged General Günther Korten, Chief of Staff of the Luftwaffe. 'We find out the most precious secrets of their war councils, their most confidential plans and ideas! But as to whether three buildings have been burned down in London, or a hundred or five hundred – we haven't a clue!'

Korten mumbled, 'We've put all our star agents on to it.' These agents were in fact fictitious, the product of an Abwehr attaché's imagination.

One relief to Hitler in this darkening month of December 1943 was the steadfast refusal of Turkey to declare war on Germany. Hitler, Ribbentrop,

Himmler, and Papen were satisfied that the photocopies being furnished regularly by Cicero were authentic – angry telegrams classified as being 'Of Particular Secrecy' from Eden and Churchill, records of their secret meetings with Stalin at Teheran, and a letter from Allied headquarters in Cairo confirming that because of the German victory in the islands of Kos and Leros operations in the Aegean had come to an abrupt end.

The picture that emerged was of mounting and unremitting pressure by Britain on Turkey to enter the war on February 15. Turkey was asked to prepare key airfields to accommodate twenty squadrons of RAF planes. Meanwhile British submarines would enter the Black Sea to operate against the Crimea and the Romanian coastline.

Turkey, however, saw no cause to help the hangman weave the noose. At their Cairo meetings, she realised, Churchill and Eden had written off the Balkans and eastern Europe to Stalin. 'The President [Inönü] returned from Cairo horrified,' the Turkish foreign minister told Papen, 'and said that if he had seen this coming, he would never have gone there.' Thanks to Cicero, Hitler was soon reading the British ambassador's enraged telegram to Churchill on December 13, reporting that the Turks were demanding impossible amounts of armaments before they would agree to terms – a ploy familiar to the Führer from his dealings with the Italians. Eden accepted temporary defeat and cabled the following to his ambassador:

> To sum up. Our object is to get Turkey into the war as early as possible, and in any case to maintain a threat to the Germans from the eastern end of the Mediterranean, until Overlord is launched. . . We still have not given up the idea that our squadrons should fly in on 15th February.

'Overlord' was evidently the code name for the 1944 invasion in the west. 'There's not the slightest doubt that the attack will come in the spring; none whatever.' As the Turkish foreign minister said to Papen imploringly, 'We are at the most critical pass in our recent history. But since the Balkans are to be sacrificed to the Russians . . . we have no alternative but to keep playing our hand the way we are doing, in the hope that the German eastern front holds firm.'

This was the political significance of the Crimea in Hitler's eyes. 'The Finns can't just jump overboard; when all's said and done they will still have to defend themselves.' Not so Turkey, Bulgaria, and Romania. Stalin recognised this too, for his main winter offensive, when it opened on De-

cember 24 was against the Fourth Panzer Army's sector west of Kiev – the left shoulder of Manstein's army group. Manstein besought Hitler to gain twelve divisions by giving up the uneconomic 'bulge' along the Black Sea and the bridgehead at Nikopol while there was still time. Politically, this would be disastrous; but even militarily Hitler doubted whether Manstein was right.

He was enraged by the 'white lies' in Manstein's telegram: it spoke of German 'counter-operations' where it meant 'decamping'; and it vaguely observed, 'We might hope that the enemy. . .' Hitler angrily lectured Zeitzler: 'The enemy's not going to do what we *hope*, but what will damage us the most!' Manstein, he said, was acting as if his army group was the orphan of the eastern front.

In fact, since October Hitler had sent him five first-class panzer divisions and three infantry divisions. 'If his troops are badly demoralised, then it's because of the spirit permeating them from above.' When the field marshal warned that there were 47 Soviet infantry divisions and nine tank corps confronting him, Hitler refused to acknowledge that these could be anything but worn-out divisions which had been 'reconditioned' and fed back to the battlefields. With heavy sarcasm he commented, 'Our German divisions are "all rotten formations," the Russians are all "fresh as a daisy."'

'If we retire here,' he said, 'then this' – presumably jabbing at the Crimea on the map – 'is lost.' Zeitzler blurted out: 'The Crimea is as good as lost anyway sooner or later.' Hitler disagreed. 'I'll think it over during the night again. You know, Zeitzler, we can all put on airs and say, It's as good as lost. But when the time comes and it *is* lost, it won't be Manstein who accepts the blame: the responsibility is *ours*. . . They [the British] are trying to blackmail Turkey into joining the war on February 15,' he reminded Zeitzler. 'Herr Manstein won't take any responsibility for that. He'll just say, "That's a matter for the politicians."' In addition, if Antonescu lost his army in the Crimea, he might be overthrown. 'That is why we are duty-bound to defend this second Stalingrad if at all possible.'

For many nights Hitler worried over the strategic decision. He asked Zeitzler early on December 29 to work out how many divisions Küchler could release to Manstein if Army Group North was withdrawn to the East Wall line. Admiral Dönitz, however, voiced emphatic protests and on January 5, 1944, Hitler forbade any voluntary withdrawal. The consequence was that when the Russian offensive began there nine days later, Küchler's weakened army group was thrown back onto the East Wall line anyway.

Küchler was replaced by General Model, Hitler's stoutest defensive expert, and he halted the Soviet onslaught.

As for the Allies, the end of 1943 saw Hitler completely ignorant of their intentions. A regular participant in the war conferences, Captain Heinz Assmann, summarised on December 29:

> The questions occupying the Führer and Wehrmacht operations staff now are primarily these:
>
> 1. Is all the Anglo-American huffing and puffing about an invasion in the west – speeches, articles, new appointments, and newspaper reports – really serious or just an immense bluff to dupe Germany and perhaps Russia too? Are they trying to lure units away from the eastern front or prevent us from reinforcing that front at the crucial moment of the Soviet winter offensive?
>
> 2. Is the invasion ballyhoo a diversion for a major operation in the *Balkans*, either via Crete, Rhodes, and the Aegean, or via Turkey, or both?
>
> 3. Is the invasion planned *not* for the west but perhaps in Denmark–Norway after all?
>
> 4. Is Turkey as reliable as she seems, or has she perhaps already resigned herself to the passage of British troops and the use of her airfields?
>
> 5. Can we hold on to the Ukraine, which is vital for feeding the German people? Where can we still cut back on strength to help the worst pressure points on the eastern front? Where is the first infallible clue as to their real invasion intentions?
>
> 6. Will the U-boat campaign with the new submarine types result in the desired successes?

RECENT NAVAL events had greatly enhanced Dönitz's standing at the Wolf's Lair, despite their disastrous outcome. Once again the navy had shown an aggressive spirit which Hitler sadly missed in his field marshals.

On Sunday December 26 the battleship *Scharnhorst* had attacked an Allied convoy in the Arctic. But at 7:35 P.M. Dönitz telephoned Hitler to report that British warships had picked up *Scharnhorst* while still thirty miles off, and had evidently destroyed her.

An hour earlier, Berlin had monitored the bewildered Rear Admiral Bey signalling: 'Finish her off with torpedoes! – Fire a star shell! – Clear the target area except for those ships with torpedoes and one destroyer with searchlight.' Hitler accepted the warship's loss philosophically. If the en-

emy's radar was so good, then *Scharnhorst* had been like a blind man boxing with a prize-fighter.

Hitherto German radar research had been controlled by Göring. It was a conspicuous failure. Under pressure from Speer and Dönitz at the Wolf's Lair on January 2, Hitler now transferred it to Speer's control.

IN THE bitter, protracted contest that the war had now become, with four-fifths of the fighting front recruited from German civilian life, Hitler recognised that political indoctrination was as important as material armament. By early 1943 troop morale was suffering, particularly from the front-line soldier's uncertainty about the fate of his wife and family under the heavy British air raids. Hitler expected his generals to explain the purpose of the struggle to their men; he had addressed them – assembled by Bormann for this purpose at the Wolf's Lair on October 16 – and reassured them that he would not emulate the hated political commissar system of the Bolsheviks: he would elevate loyal and politically conscious officers to positions in which they could influence their comrades.

There is no doubt that Hitler was finally impelled to issue his order of December 22, 1943, establishing an OKW National Socialist Leadership Staff, by the subversion campaign being directed against the eastern front by the renegade German generals taken prisoner at Stalingrad. 'The most dangerous developments at the front at this juncture,' Hitler asserted later, 'are definitely the proclamations printed by General Seydlitz. . . The proclamations arrive in black-white-and-red' – the colours of the Reich – 'and the ordinary soldier can't tell what's true and what isn't. Besides, our soldiers have always taken officers to be men of honour.'

The troops were completely deceived by trick photomontages published by these Moscow renegades. He appointed General Hermann Reinecke to set up a small fanatical leadership staff. But while these new Party-indoctrinated 'leadership officers' would undoubtedly influence the lower command levels, Hitler himself would have to speak to the senior generals.

At first he hesitated, saying: 'It would be hard to bring them all together at the same time.' Bormann, however, was eager. 'If it could be done, it would be the biggest success.' Keitel suggested that they would have to appoint a specially capable 'leadership officer' for the army. Hitler replied without hesitation, 'Schörner. He is a fanatic!' Until recently commander of the bridgehead at Nikopol, Schörner was a tough general not given to defeatism. Only recently he had ended a letter to Schmundt with the words:

'You know the position here. But we will pull through.' How different that was from the melancholy Manstein, who saw his fame as a commander withering before his eyes.

Manstein arrived in agitation on January 4, 1944, and again demanded permission to withdraw his entire southern sector. He embarked upon a forceful critique of Hitler's overall command in the east. Hitler tried to stare him down but the field marshal could not be charmed. He recommended that Hitler appoint a Commander in Chief East. Hitler pointed out that nobody had as much authority as he had, 'and even I am not obeyed by my field marshals. Do you think they would obey *you* any better?' He could offer Manstein no fresh divisions. In the west they must first wait until the invasion had been defeated, or the British had got bogged down in Portugal – his latest *idée fixe*. Hitler explained to Manstein that he was fighting to gain time – time for the U-boat campaign beginning in May 1944 to bite, time for the smouldering East–West dispute to blaze up into the open – and returned him to the front. In the event, Manstein's soldiers were able to withstand the winter onslaught, yielding almost no ground to the Russians. Where there was a will, Hitler concluded, there was evidently a way.

During these first days of 1944, Hitler laid down the material foundations of the coming year's campaign. He personally besought Dönitz, Speer, and their submarine experts to keep to production targets. He had instructed Göring to concentrate production effort on the jet aircraft, and he ordered jet-engine production to be housed underground at the Central Works tunnel-factory already producing A-4 rockets near Nordhausen. On January 4 he again told Speer and Milch how much he was relying on the new secret U-boat types and the jet aircraft. 'If I get the jets in time, I can fight off the invasion with them' – and again, 'If I get a few hundred of them to the front line, it will exorcise the spectre of invasion for all time.'

Germany somehow had to raise more than four million new workers. The whole afternoon was devoted to a conference between Keitel, Speer, Milch, and Herbert Backe, agriculture minister, as the 'employers' and Sauckel and Himmler as the 'manpower procurers.' Hitler was still loath to employ female workers on a scale comparable to Russia, Britain, and the United States, explaining that there was no comparison between 'our long-legged, slender women' and the 'stocky, primitive, and robust Russian women.' Sauckel was banking on using Italian forced labour, but once again the 'Italian problem' thwarted Hitler. To please Mussolini, he had agreed to the

raising of a modest new Italian army – four divisions; the Italian internees had only to volunteer for these to escape labour service.

The only ray of sunshine in this darkness had been Mussolini's unexpected arrest of Count Ciano: together with his 'fellow conspirators' Ciano was tried and condemned to death by a Fascist court in Verona in January. His wife, Edda (Mussolini's daughter), managed to escape to Switzerland, having addressed this letter to Hitler:

> Führer! Twice I believed your word, and twice I have been cheated. Only the soldiers lying on the battlefields prevent me from deserting to the enemy.
>
> If my husband is not released . . . nothing but that will stop me: for some time now the documents have been held by people authorised to make use of them if anything were to happen to my husband, me, my children, or my family.

A similar letter had gone to Mussolini himself. Hitler took no action to intervene, and Ciano, bound to a chair, met the Fascist firing squad at nine A.M. on January 11.

THE SPECTACULAR failure of the Allies to make any headway in Italy was a huge comfort to Hitler. Since early September they had managed to advance only forty kilometres – little more than six miles per month. While General Jodl maintained his instinctive fear for the Balkans for some months yet, Hitler concluded from the Cicero reports that he could safely draw on his Balkan contingents. On January 12 the British foreign office had cabled in exasperation to the British ambassador in Ankara that Turkey was unlikely now to enter the war soon. 'We must now concentrate our main effort on maintaining the threat to the Germans from the eastern Mediterranean.'

According to the Cicero documents, Britain's ambassador was informed that Turkey was required to enter the war at the same time as 'Overlord' began; this finally convinced Hitler that enemy strategy in the Balkans would be limited to diversionary operations. The Turkish foreign minister, Menemencioglu Numan, informed a furious British ambassador: 'We are not so stupid as to get dragged into a war against our own interests for the second time in twenty-five years.' Ribbentrop instructed that a quarter of a million gold marks were to be paid to Cicero; it was a reward well spent.

Hitler next saw Manstein on January 27. At Schmundt's suggestion, he had summoned the principal generals from the Russian front. Row upon row, they sat before him in the dining room of a converted inn in the OKW's Security Zone II, near the Wolf's Lair. For two days, over at Posen, these generals had listened to speeches by Goebbels, Rosenberg, and other Party leaders. On just the previous day, Himmler had spoken quite frankly to them about what he had done with the Jews, and most of the officers had rewarded him with an ovation.*

Now – after Morell had given Hitler the obligatory injections – they heard him lecture articulately and, if the shorthand record be taken as a guide, powerfully on war and nations, and on the influence of leadership and racial character on a nation's morale. He hinted at new torpedoes, new submarines, new radar equipment, and secret weapons which would turn the tide in their favour after May 1944; until then they must grimly hold out. For this, National Socialist indoctrination – that same 'holy conviction' that distinguished the Reich from the merely administrative structure that had been Fascism in Italy – was indispensable.

Toward the end of his speech, something incredible occurred.

For the first time, he was loudly interrupted. He had just addressed this challenge to the generals: '. . . If the worst comes to the worst and I am ever abandoned as Supreme Commander by my people, I must still expect my entire officer corps to muster around me with daggers drawn – just as every field marshal, or the commander of an army, corps, division, or regiment expects his subordinates to stand by him in the hour of crisis.'

As he paused for effect, Manstein's voice came from the front row, loud and – possibly – reproachful: '*And so it will be*, mein Führer!'

Hitler hoped at first that the field marshal had meant to reassure him of their loyalty, but Bormann told him the generals had interpreted the outburst otherwise: that the worst would indeed come to the worst. It was an interruption of exquisite ambiguity.†

* 'We were all there in Posen,' recalled one rear-admiral, 'when that man told us how he had killed off the Jews. . . . I can still recall precisely how he told us: If people ask me, "Why did you have to kill off the children too?" then I can only say, "I'm not such a coward that I leave for my children something I can do myself."' – Rear-Admiral Engel, CSDIC (UK) report SRGG.1167, in PRO file WO.208/4169.

† It resulted, according to Schmundt's diary, in Manstein's eventual dismissal.

Twice that day – both in his speech and in the private evening circle – Hitler again formulated his goal as winning for Germany the 'world domination' for which she was 'predestined.'

That night he told Bormann of his unorthodox ideas for making good Germany's disastrous casualties. Hitler remarked that Germany's most important asset, the fertility of generations of German women – perhaps three or four million of them – would be wasted unless men could be found for them. Every sound German woman, married or not, must bear as many children as possible to safeguard Germany's future. Writers, poets, and artists must henceforth extol the unmarried mother. As in animal breeding, the finest specimens of manhood must do their bit, and German womanhood must be educated to abandon their fanatical insistence on marital fidelity – 'a fetish they often ignore themselves until they are married,' Hitler slyly observed.

Otherwise, he argued, one day all of Europe would be overwhelmed by the Asiatic hordes of which the current Russian plague was but a part. 'We must look at the population charts of Europe and Asia in 1850, 1870, and 1900,' said Hitler, 'and try to visualise what the map of 1945 will be.'



Rocket scientist Prof. Wernher von Braun and his team pose with War Department generals at the Peenemünde missile research station (AUTHOR'S COLLECTION)

Trouble from Providence

The Hitler of early 1944 was unlike the confident Führer who had set out for the Polish front in his train in September 1939. His energy and willpower remained unsapped, but his secretaries noticed that sometimes his knees would begin to shake, or he had to clasp his trembling left hand with his right. Yet he refused to take these symptoms seriously. We know from Morell's papers that for five months after September 1943 he continually urged Hitler to submit to a further electrocardiogram, without success. When the adjutants reproved Morell for his treatment, his exasperated reply was invariably the same: '*You* try treating a patient like the Führer!'

For all his obesity Morell retained Hitler's affections. Each evening at Hitler's midnight tea party, Morell would be snoring loudly within minutes of slumping into an armchair. Hitler's eyes were alive with sympathy and indulgence at this spectacle. 'He was and is the only one who can help me,' he said. Sometimes Colonel von Below, the Luftwaffe adjutant, gently nudged the doctor. Then the physician would wake up and chuckle loudly, assuming that the Führer had told a joke.

Hitler rarely came in contact with people from the world outside his headquarters. Schmundt and Schaub introduced what new faces they could to the evening conversation parties – the architect Hermann Giesler, the wives of the adjutants, and former members of Hitler's staff like Hans Pfeiffer and Hans Junge, both of whom would die in action shortly. Many of the old familiar faces were gone. 'Reichsleiter Bormann,' Morell lamented in one letter, 'is mostly away on business in Berlin and Munich. Heini Hoffmann [the photographer] only puts in a guest appearance every four weeks or so. Scarcely anybody of the old clique is still here. The headquarters has outgrown itself, and most people are preoccupied with themselves.'

Bormann's influence over Hitler was now immense. Rosenberg, Lammers, and the other Cabinet ministers rarely penetrated his protective shield around the Führer. Hitler was told only what Bormann (and Himmler) wanted him to know about internal Reich affairs.

The long-delayed visit by Dr. Hans Frank, Governor General of occupied Poland – on February 6, 1944 – provides a further significant example. The Russian army was now fighting on Polish soil, but Hitler – 'exceptionally forthright and looking the picture of a healthy, dynamic, and active man' as Frank wrote that day – assured the Governor General that he would not allow the Generalgouvernement to become a battlefield. 'Yes, my dear Frank, it *is* odd: previously we regarded the Generalgouvernement as something of a backwater; today it is our bulwark against the east.' He applauded Frank's new policies aimed at securing Polish assistance in the fight. But even Hans Frank seems to have been pulling the wool over his Führer's eyes; in his eighteen-page diary record of the discussion Frank touched on the Jewish problem only once: 'I said that eliminating the Jews by getting them out of the Generalgouvernement had taken a great load off the country's general situation.'

Afterward Frank ran into Morell. 'I asked him,' wrote Frank, 'about the Führer's health. He claimed it is better than ever before. His stomach pains are gone and his appetite has returned – a particularly good sign. He said he was proud of this achievement.' Shortly after, Hitler's appetite failed again, however, though for a different reason. When Frau von Exner, the Viennese dietician, became engaged to an SS adjutant at headquarters, it was learned that she had a Jewish great grandmother. Hitler had to dismiss her. He told her, 'I cannot make one rule for myself and another for the rest.' Thus she would survive the war – more fortunate than her successor.

HITLER'S REAL fear was of the invasion threat looming in the west. 'If only they would land half a million men,' he had reflected on December 30, 'and then foul weather and storms cut them off in the rear – then everything would be all right!' That day Hitler had instructed his representatives in Copenhagen to resort to terrorist tactics to stamp out acts of sabotage and assassination by the underground in Denmark. He ordered Himmler's agents to strike back under cover against leading Danish opponents and their property. The next day an SS marksman gunned down an opposition journalist, and a few days later the spiritual leader of the Danish resistance, Pastor Kaj Munk, was assassinated. 'You can't smash terrorism by philosophising,' Hitler

told his generals on January 27, 1944, 'you have to smash it by using even greater terror.'

By early 1944, Rommel was confidently asserting his authority in preparing the anti-invasion defences. Hitler was cautiously optimistic; the Allies, he reasoned, had secured footholds in Africa and Italy only because of the Italian traitors. 'But they won't find any of those here – they'll get the thrashing of their lives!' He also said, 'I am convinced that when the time comes it will be a huge relief.' He commanded that pillboxes for three thousand new anti-tank and other guns were to be built by the end of April at the very latest. Most important of all, he now gave Rommel's army group tactical command of the armies along the Channel coast. Hitler counted on the Desert Fox to light a bonfire under these armies – before the Allies could in the spring.

On January 15, General Jodl reported to Hitler on his own tour of the Atlantic defences. He was unimpressed by the pace of fortification activity; the Germans were fraternising with the French coastal population, he said, and the Luftwaffe had not planned ahead at all. He supported Rommel's contentions wholeheartedly. Rommel began implementing tactical concepts strongly opposed to those of Rundstedt. The latter had planned a flexible defence on French soil, with a powerful mobile reserve of panzer divisions in the rear. Rommel convincingly argued that the enemy, once ashore, could marshal such overwhelming material strength that he could never be dislodged; the panzer divisions must be brought right up to the coast, otherwise they would arrive too late – or not at all, if the enemy destroyed the road and railway links before them.

This tallied well with Hitler's vision: '. . . The main thing,' he said, 'is that the moment the invasion begins the enemy must be smothered in bombs – that'll force them to take cover, and even if there's only one jet airborne, they'll still be forced to take cover and this will delay them hour upon hour. But in half a day our reserves will be well on their way!'

This delay would also enable Hitler to take stock: 'Which is the decoy – and which is the real invasion!'

With his Party backing and with his profound influence on Hitler, Rommel was able to start fresh divisions moving to the west. He demanded millions of mines per month; he prepared to flood low-lying areas. He drew up plans for submerged barriers of massive spikes to gash open the hulls of landing boats, and nutcracker mines supported on iron girders, some visible, some below the water's surface. Tempted by the cash rewards, the

male French population assisted, while their womenfolk made rush-matting for sand traps or helped to erect anti-paratroop defences. According to Rommel, they worked with a will and finished each day 'singing lustily'; they knew what would happen to their towns and villages if France was turned into a battlefield.

Wholly unexpectedly – and without even a hint from the German Intelligence services – on January 22 an American corps staged a sudden seaborne landing south of Rome at Anzio – to the rear of the German lines. Misled by the assurances of Admiral Canaris, Kesselring had denuded this coastline; only two German battalions met the American troops.

Both sides fumbled. Kesselring delayed his counterattack for a week, to allow heavy units to arrive. The Luftwaffe's Richthofen scornfully noted in his diary: 'Thus we violate the cardinal rule of war accepted for many millennia – to wade into enemy beachheads with everything you've got immediately, so as to exploit the disorder always reigning in the first few days.' But the Americans were even more hesitant in consolidating their beachhead. 'Politics play a big part,' Hewel reminded Hitler. 'No general over there can afford big defeats.' Hitler reasoned, 'If we can wipe them out down there, then there won't *be* an invasion anywhere else' – Roosevelt could not take such a risk in a presidential election year. But Hitler's sixth sense urged caution on him too, telling him that Anzio was less a battle for Rome than a sly enemy attempt to lure the high-grade German reserves away from France into a peripheral war of attrition in Italy; and after the long-delayed counterattack by Mackensen's Fourteenth Army failed to throw the Americans back into the sea, he was content to see the beachhead merely contained.

Hitler asked Jodl to determine precisely why Intelligence had failed to predict the landing at Anzio. Kesselring claimed that it was Canaris's fault. Early in February, the defection to the British of Erich Vermehren, an important Abwehr agent in Turkey, put the last nail in the admiral's long-prepared coffin. This brought even Cicero's operations to an abrupt end. Hitler had had enough of Admiral Canaris. He told Himmler to set up a 'unified German secret Intelligence service.'

On the Russian front, Hitler clung fanatically to his belief that Stalin's military strength was waning. Later in February, Zeitzler's staff produced estimates that over 18,000,000 of the 46,000,000 able-bodied men avail-

able to Stalin in 1941 had now been eliminated by battle casualties or loss of territory. This was why Hitler defended every centimetre of ground even though the Russians were still moving men and equipment into their battlefront faster than he himself could. As that front moved ever closer to German soil, Hitler's willingness to permit operational retreats like the 'Buffalo' movement of 1943 diminished. From now on the German soldier would fight where he stood, holding out until the inevitable breach between east and west came to his salvation: such was Hitler's strategy.

In the north, Model's army group was preparing its final withdrawal to the East Wall line. In the centre, Busch's line was still intact. But a gap of over 150 miles yawned north of Manstein's Army Group South. Since January 284,000 German troops had been encircled at Cherkassy on the Dnieper River: after weeks of harrowing fighting Hitler reluctantly authorised the garrison there to break out as best they could, leaving their injured to the mercies of the enemy. The dramatic escape began on the night of February 15 – led by a silent phalanx of troops with fixed bayonets, followed by the artillery and heavier equipment. Instead of the Second Panzer Corps waiting to receive them in a designated position, they were greeted by well-armed Russian units. Abandoning their heavy gear the men fought on westward. They were confronted by a river, sprang into the icy waters, and forded it or were drowned. Only 30,000 of the 54,000 who set out reached the German lines.

In the Cherkassy pocket Stalin had again employed his deadly psychological weapon, the League of German Officers: Seydlitz and his fellow generals had broadcast appeals over Moscow radio to their encircled former comrades to lay down their arms. Officers in German uniform had infiltrated into the pocket to commit acts of sabotage and deliver secret letters from Seydlitz to the corps commanders – Stemmermann and Lieb.

There was a curious sequel: at Goebbels's suggestion, indeed at his dictation, General Schmundt drew up a declaration of personal loyalty to the Führer and took it on himself to secure every field marshal's signature to it.

Flying first to the most senior of Germany's serving soldiers – von Rundstedt in France – and satisfying the field-marshal of the authenticity of Seydlitz's treachery, Schmundt then went on to Model, Rommel, Kleist, Busch, Manstein, and Weichs in turn.

The latter wrote in his diary: 'Such a reaffirmation of our oath of allegiance seems unmilitary to me. An officer's loyalty ought to be taken for granted.'

For a variety of reasons, Hitler decided it was time to go to the Obersalzberg for a while. He wanted to be closer to the Italian front. 'We have built headquarters in just about every other corner of the Reich,' he wanly joked, 'but never dreamed that we should one day need one near Italy!' The truth was however that he could no longer take the risk of an enemy air raid on the Wolf's Lair in its present state. The British bomber force had a month earlier dropped twenty-four hundred tons of bombs on Berlin in one night; both the British and American air forces had East Prussia well within their range. Thus he entrained for Munich on February 23, 1944, while the Todt Organisation moved in to erect even stronger bunkers at Rastenburg.

It is unlikely that he glimpsed the bomb-torn ruins of the cities he passed through. He consistently and consciously avoided seeing the misery his enemies had wrought, and the blinds were drawn to shield his painful retinas. For two weeks now he had been troubled by a stabbing pain and increasingly opaque veil in his right eye, of such turbidity as to render him virtually blind when he closed his other eye. That night a heavy British attack was beginning on Schweinfurt, and six hundred bombers were over Bavaria. The crack of the anti-aircraft batteries was still echoing around the sleepy valleys when Hitler arrived at the Berghof at 10:15 P.M. A staff stenographer wrote in his diary: 'The war conference was slated to begin at 11:30 P.M. As we stood by in the anteroom the Führer came in with Reichsleiter [Martin] Bormann, Gruppenführer [Albert] Bormann, and the rest of his staff, having toured the air raid shelter tunnels built here in recent months. He welcomed us with a friendly grin. The conference began at 11:45 P.M. and ended at five past midnight.'

Camouflage netting covered the Berghof and even at midday only a melancholy twilight filtered through the famous windows of the Great Hall. This was just as well. On March 2 a leading Berlin eye specialist examined Hitler's blue-grey eyes; he diagnosed 'minute haemorrhages in the vitreous humour,' and recommended to Morell that the Führer submit to two quarter-hour periods of complete relaxation every day with heat treatment by sun-lamp if possible. He was to avoid all 'unnecessary excitement, particularly during the period immediately before the night's rest.'

Everybody who saw Hitler was shocked by his physical transformation. Defeat was carving deep hollows in his features. Small wonder that when Eva Braun gently reproached him for walking with a stoop, he would reply,

'That's because of the burden of worries I'm carrying all the time.' Goebbels, visiting him on March 3, found one eye hideously bloodshot: the dictator revealed that he was now planning to invade Hungary, when he would put paid to that country's treacherous aristocracy and its Jews once and for all.

Hitler told the minister that as soon as he had dealt with the coming Allied invasion (if it invasion ever came) he would take forty divisions from the west and hurl them at the eastern front. Bolstering Dr. Goebbels's own morale he told him of the new Panther and Tiger tanks, and the bigger and better firepower of their fighter planes. He urged the minister however to give his backing to Reichsmarschall Göring, failure though he was. 'He can't stand criticism right now,' he explained, lamely. 'You've got to watch your tongue very carefully when you tell him things.'

On March 5 the two armaments 'dictators' Milch and Saur came to the Berghof. Their report on future aircraft, tank, and gun production was optimistic despite the crushing blows dealt by the enemy bombers. Hitler agreed to make fighter aircraft production a top priority and demanded that the two planned bunker-factories should each have at least seven million square feet of floor space, capable of housing everything needed for aircraft manufacture from the forging of the crankshafts and smelting of the steel down to the finished product. He released sixty-four miners to Saur from the gangs tunnelling air raid shelters under the Berghof, and advised him to train at least *ten thousand* more; he must not rest until Germany's entire war industry was underground.

Flying bomb production was already there – underground. Milch gleefully urged Hitler to begin the attack on England on April 20 – Hitler's birthday – loosing off fifteen hundred of the pilotless missiles in the next ten days and the rest in May. 'It will be the most evil torture you can imagine,' he told his staff. 'Just picture for yourselves a large high-explosive bomb falling on Berlin every half-hour and nobody knowing where the next will fall! Twenty days of that will have them all folding at the knees!'

Hitler, however, delayed the flying-bomb attack. Perhaps he wanted all the 'revenge' weapons to open fire simultaneously – A-4 rocket, flying bomb, 'high-pressure pump,' and Krupp's 'Gustav' long-range guns, coupled with a saturation attack on London by Sperrle's Third Air Force. But the army's rocket missile was well behind schedule. In January only fifty , in February only 86 A-4s had left the underground Central Works. (In May, Peenemünde's General Dornberger wryly reported: 'Our main problem is getting the

missiles to the target in one piece'; most of them were blowing up in midair.) Speer's closest adviser, Karl-Otto Saur, recommended on March 5 that Hitler consider converting the Central Works factory from A-4 assembly to fighter-aircraft manufacture: the tunnels were big enough to house a plant turning out a thousand planes a month. Hitler appeared to agree, but someone changed his mind again – perhaps it was Speer himself, whom Hitler visited two weeks later bearing a bouquet of flowers on the minister's thirty-ninth birthday.

MISTRUSTFULLY, HITLER had taken to summoning low-ranking officers to the Berghof and hearing them closely out. For several days he interviewed soldiers from platoon level upward about the fighting at Anzio. They told him of the crushing enemy artillery superiority, of inferior German radio gear and of faulty hand-grenades. Then he invited the generals. A panzer general, Gerd von Schwerin, related how the Russians had kept their notorious wet-weather offensives rolling by rounding up thousands of women and making each one wade ten miles through the slime to the front lines with a shell on her back.

The new force in Hitler's life was undeniably Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz. It was the admiral who had cajoled Hitler into preventing the earlier withdrawal of Army Group North to the East Wall. It was Dönitz too who had demanded the retention of the Crimea. And now that Hitler's health was poor, it was Dönitz and not Göring whom he sent to preside over the Memorial Day parade in Berlin and to address the ten thousand new officer-candidates in Breslau. Göring and Ribbentrop were deeply wounded by Hitler's loss of faith in them. The latter privately made an offer to Hitler which showed that he certainly made up in personal courage whatever he might lack in diplomacy. As Walter Schellenberg, chief of Himmler's foreign Intelligence service, later wrote:

> Ribbentrop told the Führer frankly that their biggest and most dangerous enemy was the Soviet Union. . .
>
> The Führer shared this view and even mused out loud that Stalin was the only one for whom he could find the necessary respect, if one day he was going to reach a compromise peace with somebody after all.
>
> He – Ribbentrop – then . . . announced to the Führer his willingness to sacrifice his own life, if he could save Germany thereby. His plan was to do all he could to lure Stalin once more to the conference table; then

he would gun him down. For a long time the Führer had turned this over in his mind, and then finally replied, 'No. I don't like anything like that. It would be asking for trouble from Providence.'

One day in mid-March 1944 Hitler invited Goebbels to stay at the snow-covered Berghof. Together they watched several of the colour movies that Eva Braun had shot of them in 1939 and again in 1942. Goebbels now noticed even more forcefully how aged and stooped the Führer had become in those three years. Hitler remarked that he was longing for the Allied invasion to come, so he could get it over with.

He had reacted to Italy's defection in September 1943, he said, by ordering contingency plans for the armed occupation of Romania and Hungary (code-named 'Margarethe I' and 'II') should either Antonescu or Horthy follow Badoglio's example.

Antonescu had sworn continued loyalty, and Hitler believed him. Horthy, however, was something else. Hungary had not only refused formal recognition to the new Mussolini government, but had accepted legations from *both* the Badoglio and the Fascist regimes; and she had noisily demanded the return of her nine light divisions policing the rear areas on the Russian front. In February 1944, Ribbentrop received a report proving that Hungary was clandestinely dealing with the enemy, and in mid-March Himmler learned that Prime Minister Kállay was advocating the sabotage of German trains running through Hungary to Manstein's and Kleist's army groups.

Hitler decided that the time had come to occupy Hungary.

In its original form, 'Margarethe' had projected using Slovak, Croat, and Romanian soldiers as well as Germans for the invasion of Hungary. On March 8 Hitler selected Sunday the nineteenth as the invasion date, but he decided to use only German troops; use of the hated satellites would destroy Hungary's economic stability. The OKW order for 'Margarethe' was issued on the eleventh; if the Hungarians did resist the German invasion, this said, their army was to be disarmed and the ringleaders shot.

On March 15 Horthy was invited to present himself at Klessheim castle near Salzburg in three days' time. Since Hitler offered in the invitation to deal with the military points raised in Horthy's letter of February 12 – which he explained he had been unable to answer earlier because of illness – Horthy would probably bring his military chiefs with him; thus Hungary would be leaderless if 'Margarethe' did result in a pitched battle.

Horthy agreed to come with his generals on the eighteenth.

On the day before, Hitler plotted with Ribbentrop, Jodl, and Himmler the precise scenario for the confrontation: at twelve-thirty there would probably be a break for lunch; this would enable Hitler to decide whether or not the Hungarians would have to be disarmed. 'If Horthy permits the invasion and there is no resistance then we defer decision on disarming and demobilising them,' wrote Jodl in his diary. Every word spoken would be monitored by hidden microphones and recorded on disks in the castle's control room. This time Hitler would accept no 'lame excuses' from the slippery admiral. ('He's a cunning rogue,' he had told General Zeitzler after the April 1943 meeting with Horthy. 'Yesterday, I got him to agree with everything I wanted, in private. And today he comes back and says, "You know, I'm very hard of hearing. It seems I only understood half of what you were saying yesterday."')

Hitler evidently anticipated worse than mere duplicity with the Hungarians this time. As he sat next to his chauffeur in his open Mercedes for the drive down to Klessheim he opened the glove compartment, took out a revolver, and checked that it was loaded; he clutched it on his lap for a while, then put it away, turning to Sonnleitner as he did so: 'Will the admiral have eaten?' he asked. The diplomat nodded.

Sure enough, as Hitler had expected, the admiral objected to the presence of Hitler's regular interpreter and insisted on talking with him in German and, as he thought, in privacy.

Hitler did not mince his language. He insisted that Horthy replace Kállay as prime minister; he announced that he had decided to march twelve German divisions into Hungary immediately to 'assist' the new government, and he demanded that Hungary's numerous divisions presently mobilised against the Romanian frontier be sent to the Russian front instead. Believing perhaps that Hitler was bluffing, Horthy charged out of the room, exclaiming: 'If it's all been decided already, there's no point in my staying!'

At a given signal from Hitler, the air raid sirens sounded and a smoke screen was laid across the castle; Horthy was told that his train could not leave in the middle of an air raid. After lunch with Himmler and the generals, Hitler inquired loudly of Keitel whether the invasion could be postponed; Keitel replied that the troops were already on the move and could not be recalled.

It was now clear to Horthy that he had been ambushed. Toward eight P.M. he cabled instructions to his Cabinet in Budapest to permit the inva-

sion. Hitler's only concession had been to agree not to occupy Budapest itself, apart from a 'guard of honour' for Horthy.

Now wreathed in smiles, the Führer conducted the aged regent to his train at nine o'clock; it was the last time he was to see him. On Austrian soil, the train was halted for several hours – it appears that Horthy's safe return was dependent on his Cabinet's honouring the agreement. Four German battle groups invaded Hungary concentrically at four A.M. At the Citadel, Horthy's official residence, a German guard of honour, immaculate and ominous, was awaiting him when he arrived at eleven.

THIS, HITLER's last conquest, was truly an outstanding coup. The invading divisions had been subtracted from the Anzio battlefield and virtually every other front. But Hungary's industrial potential was well worth the price. That very night of March 18 Hitler sent for Saur and instructed him to harness Hungarian industry to the war effort at once. The lower echelons of the Hungarian forces actually welcomed the invasion. Eventually the Hungarian contingent on the Russian front was doubled. Marshal Antonescu could also increase the Romanian contingent, now that he need no longer fear war with Hungary. Even so, Field Marshal von Weichs, Commander in Chief Southeast, whose headquarters now transferred to Budapest, wrote after seeing Hitler on March 28:

> The Führer mistrusts the Hungarians and particularly hates the Regent, who no doubt equally loathes Germany. The links with the enemy powers still exist. Her defection is still to be reckoned with, a colossal danger for the eastern front. Thus as few Hungarians as possible are to be under arms, though it will be impossible to disarm the army completely.

ON MARCH 19, 1944, the day after invading Hungary, Hitler conferred at the Berghof with his leading field marshals. Rundstedt stepped forward and read to an impassive Führer the declaration of personal loyalty which all the field marshals had now signed. Thus the German army cast out Seydlitz and his ilk from its ranks.

The next day, March 20, 1944, Hitler delivered to all the leading generals of the western front a historic speech with, according to Rommel's diary, 'marvellous clarity and sovereign composure.' After mentioning the new jet fighters and submarine types, he warned the generals to be on guard against enemy airborne operations in their rear. He again expressed the

conviction that the Allies would invade Normandy and Brittany, and not the much closer Channel coastline. There is a shorthand record of Hitler's speech among Rommel's papers:

> Obviously [he said] an Anglo-American invasion in the west is going to come. Just how and where, nobody knows, and it isn't practicable to speculate. You can't take shipping concentrations at face value for some kind of clue that their choice has fallen on any particular sector of our long western front from Norway down to the Bay of Biscay or the Mediterranean or Balkans. Such concentrations can always be moved around or transferred at any time, under cover of bad visibility, and they will obviously be used to dupe us. . .
>
> The most suitable landing areas, and hence those that are in most danger, are the two west coast peninsulas of Cherbourg and Brest: they offer very tempting possibilities for the creation of bridgeheads, which could thereafter be systematically enlarged by the massive use of air power.

In simple terms, Hitler explained to these western front commanders what would be at stake:

> The enemy's entire invasion operation must not, under any circumstances, be allowed to survive longer than hours or at most days, taking Dieppe as an ideal example. Once defeated, the enemy will never again try to invade. Quite apart from their heavy losses, they will need months to organise a fresh attempt. And an invasion failure will also deliver a crushing blow to British and American morale.
>
> For one thing, it will prevent Roosevelt from being re-elected in the United States – with any luck, he'll finish up in jail somewhere! For another, war weariness will grip Britain even faster, and Churchill, already a sick old man with his influence waning, won't be able to carry through a new invasion operation.

In conclusion, Hitler explained why the defeat of Overlord would lead to final victory for Germany: 'The forty-five divisions that we now hold throughout Europe apart from the eastern front are badly needed in the east. As soon as we have forced the decision in the west we shall transfer them to the east to revolutionise the situation there. So the whole outcome

of the war depends on each man fighting in the west, and that means the fate of the Reich as well.'

Afterward Hitler conferred alone with Rommel and awarded him control of the First and Nineteenth armies, as well as greater influence over the motorised divisions which were Rundstedt's only tactical reserve. Rundstedt grumpily saw little point in remaining as Commander in Chief West, but stayed nonetheless. Now it was Rommel who was the optimist. 'We have the utmost confidence that we'll get by in the west,' he wrote privately.

THE ALLIED bombing of German cities continued. When the Russians tried and executed as war criminals certain German officers, Hitler yearned to follow suit. On March 23 he told Hewel 'British and American war criminals must also be condemned to death and their confessions must also be publicised after their execution.' Allied airmen accused of machine-gunning civilians were to be put on trial. General Jodl suggested that since the enemy automatically executed all German agents, they should do the same with the five hundred British and American agents and saboteurs who had fallen into their net in Hungary. 'The Führer mentioned,' noted Hewel, 'that some had special assignments to murder and spread bacilli epidemics.'

On the night of March 24 the British again dumped nearly two thousand five hundred tons of high explosives and incendiary bombs on Berlin. No Geneva Convention forbade these murderous bombing raids. When the next morning Himmler announced at the Berghof that eighty Allied airmen had just escaped from a Wehrmacht prison camp at Sagan, Hitler impulsively ordered all the escapees recaptured to be turned over to the secret police. 'Himmler, you are not to let the escaped airmen out of your control!' Fifty of the fugitives were shot on Himmler's orders.

This climate of barbarism was now pervading the war. During May 1944 Allied planes began systematically machine-gunning civilian targets. Several films taken from the gun cameras of crashed fighter planes were shown at the Berghof – they showed helpless people running for their lives as the bullets streamed toward them. Hitler instructed Göring to select isolated cases and execute the culprits; Göring was reluctant, explaining to Sonnleitner that pilots could not be blamed for having 'hunting fever.' Jodl's staff suggested giving oral instructions to the commandant of the prison cage at Oberursel to turn over such airmen to Himmler's security police. But the technical problems, particularly of identification, proved insuperable. Everybody raised objections. Keitel was opposed to such a regularised 'lynch

law,' and Göring pointed out that clear cases of murder could be dealt with by properly constituted courts. The foreign ministry then stated that the Geneva Convention required a three-month stay of execution of death sentences on prisoners of war. By this time it was late June 1944 and Hitler had more pressing problems on his mind.

BY LATE March 1944 a new irreconcilable difference had emerged between Hitler and Manstein. At his noon conference at the Berghof on March 25, the field marshal fought for permission to withdraw General Hube's encircled First Panzer Army to the north-west before a second Stalingrad resulted. Hitler however insisted that Hube retain his existing battlefront between the Dniester and Tarnopol – a town he now declared a 'fortified area.' (He had just introduced this new fortress-like concept for key coastal towns in the west. They were to be commanded by hand-picked army generals who would not lose their nerve when the enemy tide swept past their strongholds.)

He blamed Manstein for the present dilemma of the First Panzer Army: Manstein had tolerated one withdrawal after another, although Göring had reported that his troops were being put to flight by only a handful of Soviet tanks. Field Marshal von Kleist followed Manstein to the Berghof on March 27 to plead for the withdrawal of his Army Group A. Shortly after he had left, Hitler told General Zeitzler: 'I have decided to release Manstein and Kleist.' Zeitzler recognised that arguing was no use.

The Führer sent his plane to fetch the two field marshals back to the Berghof on March 30.

Probably both Göring and Himmler lay behind Manstein's dismissal. The famous interruption during Hitler's January speech to the generals was a further cause. He told Manstein that evening, before the main conference, that what the southern front needed was a new name, a new slogan, and a commander expert in defensive strategy. He meant Model.

There was no bitterness between them. Hitler told an adjutant long afterward that should he ever come to mount great offensives again, Field Marshal Manstein would be their first commander. Manstein had after all been the only general to speak out for the Sedan breakthrough strategy in 1940 – and that was something he would not easily forget. Model was already waiting outside with Kleist's successor, General Ferdinand Schörner. Hitler offered Manstein his hand. The field marshal took it and said, 'I hope for your sake that your decision today turns out right for you.'

The Most Reviled

Thus the Ukraine was lost. The German invaders had been driven out by the disappointed, deceived, and angry Ukrainians themselves. 'If the rest of this war and its victorious conclusion should ever see these territories vouchsafed to us again,' a gauleiter wrote, 'then there must be a radical change in our attitude to and treatment of the native population.'

Erich Koch had achieved the seemingly impossible: he had converted the forty million Ukrainians who had greeted the German invaders as their liberators into a sullen, seething people, and driven them as partisans into the forests and swamplands of the north Ukraine. The same gauleiter – Alfred Frauenfeld, governor of the Crimea – pointed out that Hitler should have found the moral courage to replace Koch. Koch had proclaimed the inferiority of the Slavs with such raucous insistence that 'even a disaster policy deliberately planned and paid for by the enemy could hardly have done more harm.' Koch had stormed, for example: 'If I find a Ukrainian fit to sit at my table, I must shoot him!' He had dispensed with Ukrainian doctors – without reflecting that epidemics were no respecters of the German occupation forces – and had deported the able-bodied to Germany in a manner reminiscent of 'Arab slave traders.' When Hitler had instituted medals for bravery and hard work, Koch had waited nearly a year before unwillingly issuing any to the Ukrainians.

Hitler's determination to reconquer these lost Russian territories remained undimmed. He told Marshal Antonescu in March and Karl-Otto Saur in April that once the invasion threat had passed he would bring back his victorious armies from France to the eastern front and deliver the knockout blow. Instinct and intuition, those twin insidious sources of comfort to

the Führer, assured him the Red Army was almost exhausted; he said as much to Kleist on March 30, when the dismissed army group commander advised him to make peace with Stalin.

On April 8, a grim battle began to rage in the Crimea. Hitler would not relinquish his goal. In spite of Zeitzler's appeal that 'thousands of German soldiers in the Crimea will be lost if you don't act now,' Hitler refused to order their evacuation. 'One thousand more or less are of no consequence.'

Manstein shared this view; he admitted to Admiral Dönitz: 'Perhaps the Führer is *right* in not yielding one foot of ground voluntarily.'

HITLER TOLD his adjutants he would never let history reproach him for losing faith in final victory just when it was almost within his grasp – as had happened to Germany in November 1918. For the reconquest of Russia in 1945 he would need tanks and self-propelled assault guns above all. 'The air force can't win wars,' Saur told the newly appointed Fighter Staff after a long talk with Hitler on April 7. 'Its job is to protect the tank production lines and keep them working. The Russian campaign can only be ended with tanks. That's why the Führer said yesterday, "If this tank production program is realised, then it will win the war for us." But the prerequisite for this is that our Luftwaffe production targets are met one hundred percent, so that we can keep the enemy at bay and the tank factories rolling.'

When Admiral Dönitz attempted on April 13 to obtain production priority for certain naval items, Hitler flatly refused. 'Tanks and assault guns are my lifeblood too, but nonetheless we've got to put up a fighter umbrella over the Reich first of all. That is the alpha and omega of it.'

He asked Göring what had become of the underground factories that he had ordered Speer's ministry to build the previous autumn, and when Göring gave no satisfactory answer Hitler instructed Xaver Dorsch, chief of the Todt Organisation, to present himself at the Berghof the next day.

Dorsch pointed out that his organisation did not operate within the Reich frontiers – the factories were the responsibility of Speer's own construction chief, Carl Stobbe-Dethleffsen. Hitler angrily retorted, 'I've had enough of these petty squabbles!' On April 16 he ordered Dorsch to build ten bombproof hangars for the fighter squadrons, and a bombproof aircraft factory, near Landsberg in Bavaria.

Speer's reaction to this organised dismantling of his empire was immediate. On April 19 a pained letter arrived at the Berghof; its bearer orally added that Speer was minded to resign all his offices. Field Marshal Milch

begged Hitler not to let Speer go, and he asked for some message of comfort with which to repair the minister's injured vanity. Hitler drummed his fingers absently on the windows, then curtly answered, '*Jawohl*, *gut!* Tell Speer from me that I am very fond of him. Is that enough?'

Despite this, it was Saur who stood beside the Führer as the brand-new armour rumbled past him at Klessheim castle on his birthday next day – the outstanding new 38-ton pursuit tank, and Vomag's heavy, fast, low-profiled hunter-killer tank, with its ultra-long 75-millimetre gun.

Once these birthday presents were in mass production, Hitler planned to turn the tide of battle on the eastern front decisively in Germany's favour. In the eulogy which Goebbels had broadcast, he once again predicted that Hitler, and not his adversaries, would go down in history as the Man of the Century, and Goebbels's was the first congratulatory phone call to reach him two minutes after midnight.

The next afternoon he received General Hube at the Berghof, decorated him for his First Panzer Army's magnificent fighting escape from the Soviet encirclement, and promoted him to four-star general. Hitler had mentioned to the adjutants the previous evening the possibility that he would soon appoint the one-armed general as Commander in Chief of the army. Hube asked permission to fly back to Berlin that same night, for personal reasons: the Junkers crashed into a mountain outside Salzburg, killing Hube outright; the jovial Walther Hewel, also aboard the plane, received terrible burns.

A melancholy Führer welcomed Speer on the Berghof steps on April 24. Speer charmed him away from his previous intentions. Hitler told him to do as he thought best.

It was the same with the A-4 missile. On the twenty-fifth General Korten, the Luftwaffe's Chief of Staff, added his authority to the long-standing appeal by Saur and Milch for A-4 production to shut down in favour of fighter – and now tank – production. ('We won't see the A-4 this year,' Milch predicted.) Hitler refused. In the missile bombardment of England he saw an important means of striking at the morale of the enemy invasion troops.

Before considering Rommel's preparations to meet the Allied invasion, we must first investigate what was for Hitler the most disturbing event of that spring – the premature and seemingly unnecessary loss of the Crimea. On April 10 the Sixth Army had been forced to abandon Odessa, the port through which the navy had been keeping General Jaenecke's beleaguered

Seventeenth Army in the Crimea supplied; but the roots of the catastrophe went back much further – some would say to the 'Crimea psychosis' induced by General Jaenecke's furtive attempt to abandon the peninsula as early as October. Thereafter, both army and navy commanders in the Black Sea had contrived to keep Hitler, and even their own superiors, in the dark about developments. Thus, Zeitzler had sincerely assured Hitler that Nikolaiev was in no danger – the dockyard was, in fact, overrun two days later. And Kleist had informed Hitler only on March 27 that Admiral Helmuth Brinkmann had ordered the evacuation of the naval base at Odessa two weeks earlier – an arbitrary act of which even Dönitz was unaware when Hitler furiously telephoned him.

With General Schörner's appointment to Kleist's former Crimea command, renamed Army Group South-Ukraine, a fresh spirit swept through the troops. Schörner lured one Romanian division after another into the German lines and 'intermarried' them irrevocably with German units so that Antonescu could not withdraw them if he wished. He ordered any troops abandoning their positions shot for cowardice; if Russian tanks broke through they were to be destroyed in the rear and the lines repaired. Any soldier destroying any enemy tank with a bazooka was to get an immediate three-week mainland leave.

Dönitz had predicted that the loss of Odessa would make the eventual loss of the Crimea inevitable. When Zeitzler subsequently used this prediction to support his own case for the peninsula's immediate evacuation, Dönitz responded pathetically that only the Führer could take in the whole strategic situation; once the coming invasion of France had been thwarted, he pointed out, the lost territories in Russia would be reconquered. Dönitz telephoned the Berghof on April 8, emphasising that the Seventeenth Army had sufficient supplies for a siege of five or six months. Two days later, however, General Jaenecke ordered the evacuation of the Crimea to begin. He was acting on his own responsibility again, though with Schörner's subsequent approval, since a hundred Russian tanks were pouring southward following the collapse of the Romanian 10th Infantry Division on the northern front. But again Hitler had not been informed, and again he cancelled Jaenecke's order – calling instead for an evacuation of the Kerch peninsula while the northern front was repaired.

Events were now moving faster than Hitler's orders however. Even as Hitler was telephoning Dönitz that evening that not until the next day would he reach a decision on whether or not to abandon the Crimea, Jaenecke

was informing the navy that his army was already in full flight toward Sebastopol. On the twelfth Hitler issued the only order possible – all nonessential personnel were to be evacuated from the Crimea. He added, however: 'I have decided to hold on to the Sebastopol battlefield itself as long as humanly possible, to tie as many enemy forces as possible to that front.'

He ordered the army and navy to rush antitank guns, ammunition, bazookas, and above all food to Sebastopol. Dönitz promised that his navy would make every sacrifice necessary to keep the fortress provisioned, and he at least kept his word.

THE EFFECT of the Crimean débâcle on Turkey was immediate. On April 20 she bowed to Allied pressure and announced that she was no longer neutral but a pro-Allied country, and would cease the vital chrome deliveries to Germany within ten days.

Several days passed before the Russians began their all-out assault on Sebastopol – days during which they brought 27 divisions into position along the fortress's twenty-two-mile perimeter. Dönitz had evacuated 100,000 pioneers and nonessential troops to Constanta. In the precipitous retreat into the fortress, Jaenecke had lost most of his army's guns and ammunition. He had 81 pieces of artillery, 36 antitank guns, and 9 tanks.

Hitler ordered the war ministry to rush guns and ammunition to Sebastopol. Zeitzler even asked Field Marshal Milch to be put in charge – for there were many similarities with Stalingrad. Zeitzler shortly complained to Hitler that the navy's ships docking at Sebastopol to evacuate the prisoners and injured were arriving *empty* instead of bringing the army supplies Hitler had ordered. Dönitz feared that a 'sudden crisis' in the fortress might result in a demand for the navy to evacuate the entire garrison in an impossibly short time. On April 24 the admiral telegraphed to the Berghof to put himself on record that he himself had never adjudged whether Sebastopol could be held or not: 'This is the army's concern alone.' *Privately* Dönitz now accepted Zeitzler's view. The garrison was doomed; but the Führer, he decided, must have his reasons for hanging on to Sebastopol.

Hitler did: he feared that the loss of Sebastopol would set off a chain-reaction in the neutral lands. On April 25 Dönitz's two local commanders personally assured him at the Berghof that sufficient supplies for a hundred thousand troops could be convoyed to Sebastopol – provided they arrived at Constanta. Only Jaenecke spoke out against Hitler's decision to keep fighting; and even then his tongue failed him at the Berghof on April 29, and

he had to speak his real mind in a five-page letter to Hitler the next day, pleading with him to save the Seventeenth Army: 'Would it not be better,' he argued in this letter, 'to snatch this prey, over which the Bolsheviks are already crowing, from under their very noses and transfer the forces to Army Group South-Ukraine?'

It was a tempting argument, but Hitler was a realist. The Sebastopol troops would arrive dispirited and unarmed – useless as reinforcements; on the other hand, the twenty-seven Russian divisions presently besieging the fortress could immediately be thrown against the main front. The Führer had no use for an army general who could not see that; he dismissed Jaenecke from his command and ordered him court-martialed to establish why the Crimea peninsula had been lost with such staggering speed.

AGGRAVATING THIS uncertainty about the war, or perhaps because of it, his health was worsening. His tremor was so pronounced by early May 1944 that his left leg shook uncontrollably even when he was in bed. He needed Morell, but the portly doctor was discomforted by the rarefied air and lived down in Berchtesgaden itself, ascending the fifteen hundred feet to the Berghof only for two hours each midday. In his absence, his Berlin assistant Dr. Richard Weber had to tend to Hitler; the jealous Morell would not trust his consultation notes to either Dr. Brandt or his deputy, Dr. Hanskarl von Hasselbach. Weber recognised all the symptoms of psychosomatic disorders, but kept this diagnosis prudently to himself.

Morell's consultation notes with Hitler, on May 4 and 5, 1944, show that he was no easy patient. Hitler's stomach spasms had returned. The doctor advised an earlier retirement each night, but Hitler still obstinately refused to go to bed until the last enemy bomber had left German territory. In view of Hitler's heart condition Morell advised him to gulp down some coffee or take Cardiazol if he suddenly felt unwell and recommended him to try breathing pure oxygen two or three times a day. Unbeknownst to his doctors, Hitler had begun to consume quantities of Dr. Koester's antigas pills. He was also submitting to an incredible volume of medication through Morell's syringes, but he preferred it to the alternatives – spasms, fatigue, time-wasting exercise, and massage.

SINCE EARLY April 1944 he had expected to be awakened in his ice-cold Berghof bedroom one morning with word that the Anglo-American invasion had begun. For many weeks he had half hoped that the invasion cla-

mour was just bluff. 'The whole show the British are putting on looks suspiciously like a charade to me,' he had opined on April 6. 'These latest reports of censorship and security measures over there – you don't go doing that if you are *really* up to something.' And: 'I can't help feeling the whole thing will turn out to be a shameless charade.' His associates parroted this comforting assessment; but even so, to thwart attempted airborne landings, he ordered light anti-aircraft defences concentrated in France.

'From day to day we are growing stronger,' Rommel wrote on May 6. 'My inventions are coming into action. Thus I am looking forward to the battle with the profoundest confidence – it might be on May 15, or perhaps not until the end of the month.' Not only the date was uncertain. After a renewed consultation with his 'Patient A' on May 9 Professor Morell observed in his notes: 'Leg tremor, caused by agitation (invasion imminent, where?)'

Where? – this was indeed the question. While Rommel and Rundstedt believed that the enemy would land on either side of the Somme estuary, Hitler had long been convinced that the Allies would launch the invasion far to the west – either in Normandy or Brittany – so that they could establish a strategic bridgehead in the Cherbourg peninsula. He had said as much on March 4; he had so warned the western generals in his speech on March 20; he had confidently repeated it to Antonescu on the twenty-third; and he staunchly adhered to this opinion despite the contrary Intelligence from Foreign Armies West. 'I am in favour of bringing all our strength in here,' he said on April 6, tapping the Normandy coastline on the charts. 'Particularly the forces we don't absolutely have to have anywhere else.'

The papers of Rundstedt and Rommel reveal with what obstinacy they and their advisers clung to their wrong appreciation of Eisenhower's intentions. The documents reveal with equal clarity how right Hitler's predictions were. On May 1 both field marshals were sharply reminded by Jodl's staff that the Führer expected the invasion to occur in the Seventh Army's area, and on May 6 Hitler again instructed Jodl to telephone Rundstedt's Chief of Staff that he 'attached particular importance to Normandy.'

IN WESTERN Europe the Allies had begun a violent air assault on communications – bridges, railway lines, locomotives, passenger trains, and canals were the targets. The French people suffered sorely: American aircraft had killed 400 Frenchmen in Rouen on April 24 alone. The night bombing of Germany had temporarily ended in a clear victory for Göring's defences

over Sir Arthur Harris's bomber hordes. Production was rising again. Late on April 30 Saur telephoned Hitler with the aircraft and tank production figures; despite the almost total destruction of the factories in February and March, in April they had manufactured 1,859 new fighters and over 1,500 armoured fighting vehicles. Hitler replied, 'Magnificent.'

Germany just had to hold out until the great East–West clash occurred. The bones of contention were already there: the oil of the Middle East, Soviet expansion toward India, the latent rivalry between Britain and the United States. 'If we just sit tight and hold on without flinching, the big break between Britain and America is bound to come one day,' Hitler said with a chuckle to Mussolini. 'When the British realise that the Americans are after their world position then some Englishman *must* stand up against it.' What Hitler feared most was that he might not live to see the final victory – or that some military landslide might occur to snatch the political victory from his people's grasp.

WITH TOTALLY unexpected swiftness, on May 5 the Russian armies stormed and penetrated the Sebastopol fortress on the Crimea and wrote the end to the chapter Manstein had begun there so brilliantly two years before. Late on the seventh, Schörner telegraphed that the Seventeenth Army had lost 2,795 men; he was flying in all available reserves, 220-millimetre howitzer assault-guns, and heavy antitank guns, but few had yet reached the Black Sea from Germany. Twenty-four hours later Hitler conceded defeat and ordered the Seventeenth Army brought out – officers were to enforce order during the evacuation by the use of firearms if necessary. He was furious at this fiasco. To shame the army, he ordered Zeitzler to transport these remnants back to Germany, as they were fit only to work in the arms industry; as soldiers they were failures. Schörner – reporting to Hitler through the Reichsführer SS as well as through Zeitzler – bitterly blamed Kleist, his predecessor: his non-combat troops had worked a pleasant six- or seven-hour day, and the wines of the Crimea had done the rest.

Himmler told Hitler that in Schörner's view 'radical solutions' were called for in Romania, *i.e.,* rooting out everybody – and particularly General Erich Hansen, the feckless German military attaché in Bucharest. Schörner's subordinates demanded that the navy's Black Sea admirals be court-martialed. Angry Seventeenth Army officers complained of navy cowardice, but the real culprits were in the German General Staff, who had failed to transport the guns and ammunition fast enough. In the five-week

battle for the Crimea, over seventy-five thousand Germans and Romanians paid for this failure with their lives.

An unnatural calm now fell upon the whole eastern front.

PARALLEL TO the expanded tank output, Hitler still hankered after a sizeable bomber production, but Saur's fighter production program made great inroads into the bomber factories. His new Fighter Staff program would cut production to 550 bombers a month, which would support only 40 squadrons. If an even more radical plan was adopted, only 284 bombers would be assembled every month; this would support only 26 squadrons. General Korten, Chief of the Air Staff, described this plan as the death of the bomber arm. His deputy, Karl Koller, highlighted this danger in a report to Hitler on May 5 and on the nineteenth he followed it with a persuasive study of the bomber strength needed to maintain a German hegemony in Europe. At a Berghof conference with Göring on May 22, Hitler dismissed the planned production targets as quite unacceptable. Göring gave him a progress report on the Me-262 jet. Hitler congratulated him. 'Now they'll get there on time!' But a rude shock awaited him the next day.

It was May 23, 1944. Field Marshal von Richthofen had come up from Italy where that very morning a more serious thrust had begun from the Anzio beachhead. Richthofen wrote in his diary: 'Three P.M. with the Führer. He's grown older, good-looking, very calm; has very definite views on the military and political situation, no worries about anything. Again and again one can't help feeling this is a man blindly following his summons, walking unhesitatingly along the path prescribed to him without the slightest doubt as to its rightness and the final outcome. . . The unpleasant military occurrences at Cassino and – since this morning – at the [Anzio] beachhead are contemplated by him quite calmly: as he puts it, we can be thankful that we are still fighting so far down. After all, last September we all thought, and he did too, that this summer would see us fighting in the Apennines or even in the Alps.' Time was on their side, Hitler reminded the Luftwaffe commander; politically, Germany had won the war long ago.

At this moment Göring's Milch, Saur, and the aircraft specialists were ushered into the Great Hall. Hitler gazed out of the great picture window, listening absently, as the Fighter Staff's program figures were read out. When the Me-262 jet-fighter production was mentioned, he interrupted, 'Jet *fighter?* I thought the 262 was coming as a high-speed bomber?' Milch explained dismissively, 'For the time being it is being manufactured as a fighter!'

Hitler persisted: 'How many of the 262s manufactured *can* carry bombs?'

'None, mein Führer. The Me-262 is being manufactured exclusively as a fighter aircraft.'

An awkward silence followed. Milch explained that to carry a thousand-kilo bomb the jet would require extensive strengthening. Hitler lost his composure. The wonder aircraft on which he had reposed his hopes of disrupting the coming invasion was not even being built.

'Never mind!' he interrupted. 'I only want one 250-kilo bomb!'

The aircraft was so fast that it needed neither cannon nor armour-plate, argued Hitler. How much did they weigh? ('Who pays the slightest attention to the orders I give?' he complained. 'I gave an unqualified order and left nobody in any doubt that the aircraft was to be built as a fighter-*bomber.*') Saur said the cannon, armour, and ammunition weighed over five hundred kilos. 'Then it can all be taken out!' said Hitler triumphantly. Colonel Edgar Petersen, the chief of the Luftwaffe experimental station at Rechlin, nodded. 'That can be done without any difficulty.' 'Mein Führer,' protested Milch, 'the smallest infant can see this is a fighter, not a bomber aircraft!'

Hitler turned his back on him. '*Aufschlagbrand!*' whispered somebody: crashed in flames! The reference was to Milch's career.

'You gentlemen appear to be stone-deaf,' Göring raged at the Luftwaffe engineers the next day. 'The lot of you! I referred again and again to the Führer's order. He doesn't care two hoots about getting the Me-262 as a fighter. He wants it only as a bomber. . . And now suddenly it is impossible! The Führer says, "For all I care you can put the fighters on a bonfire." He wants an aircraft which can force its way through by virtue of its sheer speed, despite the enormous mass of fighters that will be guarding the invasion forces. What no civilian dares to do – simply ignore orders – you gentlemen do time after time after time.'

AT THIS time the Jewish problem again surfaced in Hitler's remarks. He was concerned about the Jews remaining in Hungary. 'We are in the process of making a clean sweep in Hungary,' he told Slovakian President Tiso on May 12. 'Over a million Jews were living in Hungary!' He described with disgust how Hungary's idle, wealthy Jews had squandered in the coffee houses of Budapest the money they had 'leeched' from the people. Franz von Sonnleitner, who transcribed the interview, recalled however that when Tiso responded with his own radical suggestions for dispensing with this 'plague on the countryside,' Hitler responded only with a noncommittal

smile. His motives differed from Himmler's. For him, said Sonnleitner, it was a matter of principle: he was just concerned to remove a potential Fifth Column from the Balkans. He was indifferent to the Jews' subsequent fate.

Once that spring Himmler faintly hinted that he was only following orders. Talking on May 5 to a high-ranking audience including General Hans-Jürgen Stumpff and Hermann Reinecke (and a member of Hitler's own staff, Admiral Hans-Erich Voss) he revealed in now stereotyped language that he had 'uncompromisingly' solved the 'Jewish problem' in Germany and Nazi-occupied countries: 'I am telling you this as my comrades,' he added. 'We are all soldiers, regardless of which uniform we wear. You can imagine how I felt executing this soldierly order issued to me, but I obediently complied and carried it out to the best of my convictions.' Never before and never again did Himmler even hint at a Führer Order; but there is reason to doubt that he dared to show this passage to his Führer, as this page of his transcript (page 28) has been manifestly retyped at a later date.

When Hitler had instructed him in April to provide two 100,000-strong contingents of Hungarian Jews to work on Saur's bombproof tank- and fighter-aircraft factories, the Reichsführer SS expressed barely concealed displeasure, calling it a 'singular' arrangement. On May 24 he assured an audience of generals, 'Not one of them will in any way cross the German public's field of view.' Himmler recalled how in 1933 and 1934 he had thrown habitual criminals into concentration camps without trial, and boasted, 'I must admit I have committed many such illegal acts in my time. But rest assured: I have resorted to these only when I felt that sound common-sense and the inner justice of a Germanic – and right-thinking – people were on my side.' With this in mind, he said, he had tackled the 'Jewish problem' too: 'It was solved uncompromisingly – on orders and at the dictate of sound common-sense.' One page later, Himmler's speech again hinted that not only men, but Jewish women and children were also being liquidated.*

When the same generals came to the Obersalzberg on May 26, Hitler spoke of the intolerance of nature, he compared Man to the smallest bacillus on the planet Earth, and he reminded them how by expelling the Jews from their privileged positions he had opened up those same positions to the children of hundreds of thousands of ordinary working-class Germans and at the same time deprived the revolutionary masses of their traditional Jewish ferment:

*This page was also retyped and possibly inserted at a later date in the typescript.

> Of course, people can say, 'Yet, but couldn't you have got out of it . . . more humanely?' My dear generals, we are fighting a battle of life and death. If our enemies are victorious in this struggle, the German people will be extirpated [*ausgerottet*]. The Bolsheviks will butcher millions upon millions of our intellectuals. Those who escape the bullet in the nape of the neck will be deported. The children of the upper classes will be taken away and got rid of. This entire bestiality has been organised by Jews. Today incendiary and other bombs are dropped on our cities although the enemy knows he is hitting just women and children. They are machine-gunning ordinary railroad trains, or farmers working in their fields. In one night in a city like Hamburg we lost over forty thousand women and children, burned to death. Expect nothing else from me, but that I do just what I think best suits the national interest and in the manner best serving the German nation. *(Prolonged loud applause.)*
>
> Kindness here as indeed anywhere else would be just about the greatest cruelty to our own people. If the Jews are going to hate me, then at least I want to take advantage of that hatred. *(Murmurs of approval.)*
>
> The advantage is this: now we have a cleanly organised nation, in which no outsider can interfere.
>
> Look at the other countries . . . Hungary! The entire country subverted and rotten, Jews everywhere, Jews and still more Jews right up to the highest level, and the whole country covered by a continuous network of agents and spies waiting for the moment to strike, but fearing to do so in case a premature move on their part drew us in.
>
> Here too I intervened, and this problem is now going to be solved too. If I may say this: the Jews had as their program the extirpation [*Ausrottung*] of the German people. On September 1, 1939, I announced in the Reichstag, if any man believes he can extirpate the German nation in a world war, he is wrong; if Jewry really tries that, then the one that will be extirpated is Jewry itself. *(Spirited applause.)*

Four hundred thousand Jews were being rounded up in Hungary; the first trainloads arrived in Auschwitz as slave labour for the now completed I.G. Farben plant.

THE INVASION had still not come. On May 24, General Korten, the Luftwaffe's Chief of Staff, had told Göring: 'The invasion appears to have been postponed.' Speer echoed this optimism. 'If nothing has happened by

July or August we can assume we shall be left in peace all winter.' Rommel was no less confident. 'Everything is going very well indeed and just as planned,' he wrote on May 19. 'Two days ago I telephoned the Führer for the first time. He was in the best of spirits and was unstinting in his praise for the job we have done in the west. I hope now to get on faster than ever. The weather meanwhile is still cold and at least it's raining. The British will just have to be patient a while.'

It was time to begin wheeling the secret weapons out from under their camouflage. But only the Luftwaffe's flying bomb had reached operational readiness. Its catapults were well concealed and awaiting last-minute assembly in a belt of countryside along the Channel coast. With these, Hitler had assured Mussolini, he would 'turn London into a garden of ruins' the moment the invasion began. In mid-May he ordered the flying-bomb offensive to start with an attack on London one night in mid-June, coupled with a fire-raising attack by Sperrle's bomber squadrons; thereafter, salvos were to be fired night after night. 'Panic will break out in England,' Hitler told his private staff. 'These flying bombs have such an unnerving effect that nobody can stand them very long. I am going to pay those barbarians back for machine-gunning our women and children and sacking our culture!'

The Allied pre-invasion bombing of France was climaxing. Three thousand French civilians died on May 28 and 29. On June 4 Hitler ordered the flying bomb regiment to stand by. 'If the British came to us now with any kind of peace feelers,' he told Slovakia's prime minister Joseph Tiso, 'I would prefer to tell them to keep their feelers – until after the invasion.'

There was one remarkable visitor from Britain at the Berghof now. Ribbentrop sent round to Hitler a former Afrika Korps commander whom the British had just repatriated for health reasons – General Hans Cramer, now forty-seven, whom the British had captured at Tunis in May 1943. In British captivity he had, he claimed, faked a lung complaint so convincingly that the British had now repatriated him. Before doing so, they had obligingly shown him their invasion preparations, including the tank-landing craft and special-purpose armoured fighting vehicles. Cramer's view was simple – Rommel's task was quite hopeless: Overlord was bound to succeed.

Ribbentrop's liaison officer, Sonnleitner, reminded Hitler that having been a political prisoner for four years himself (in Austria) he knew that no matter how refined a prisoner's tricks his captor was always one jump ahead: a captive general, of all people, could not literally get away with simulating

a lung complaint – not to a prison doctor. It was the British who had duped Cramer, argued Sonnleitner, not vice versa; they were using him for psychological warfare. Hitler answered pensively, 'Whatever, the general is to see Field Marshal Rommel and tell him what he has seen' – particularly the special tanks, and where he had seen most landing craft.

Cramer assured Rommel that the Allied invasion was going to come on both sides of the River Somme. 'They're not coming,' retorted the field marshal confidently. 'And if they do, they won't make it off the beaches.'

In Italy, now that the Anzio forces had linked up with the main battlefront, Rome could well become a battlefield, just as Stalingrad had. This produced another instance of Hitler's strange conception of morality. The same Führer who was indifferent to the fate of Jewish children was proud to have defeated Belgium without defiling Brussels, and France without attacking Paris – while his enemies had just bombed the Rouen cathedral and destroyed quite pointlessly the famous monastery at Monte Cassino. As early as February Hitler had turned down Kesselring's suggestion that in an emergency the Tiber bridges in Rome should be destroyed, as the river's steep embankments would check the most determined enemy's advance. Hitler had reiterated that Rome's status as an 'open city' must be strictly observed. He might jest to Mussolini: 'You and I are the most reviled men in the world,' but he did not want to go down in history as the man who caused Rome to be destroyed. Therefore, Wehrmacht troops had been forbidden to set foot there, and even during the fiercest fighting at Anzio all military transports had been tediously diverted around the outskirts of Rome.

This forbearance brought no Allied response. When Kesselring formally suggested through the Vatican, on June 3, that both sides continue to respect the 'open city,' the Allies made no reply but instead appealed to the city's populace to join the battle. The British and American tanks penetrated to the very heart of Rome the next day. Hitler should now have blown up the bridges, but he did not. Late the next evening, June 5, 1944, Roosevelt broadcast news of the victory; the American president attributed to the skill of his generals the fact that Rome had escaped damage.

Hitler was unimpressed by the city's capture, telling Dr. Goebbels that same evening that the real decision would come if and when the Allies invaded France. The Germans had the loss of their air supremacy to thank for their difficulties in Italy. Goebbels rather feared that they would face the same problems in the west. In an odd mood, Hitler ventilated the idea of

allowing the Red Army into Romania, to panic the western powers. 'He considers Britain done for,' Goebbels afterwards dictated, 'and is resolved to give her the *coup de grâce* at the slightest opportunity.'

Goebbels added that he could not quite see precisely how Hitler was going to achieve that. At ten P.M. word was passed to Goebbels that radio intercepts seemed to indicate that the invasion had begun, but he found little sense of urgency when he dined with Hitler and Speer afterwards.

To those who sought them, there were powerful indicators that something major was afoot. The Abwehr in Paris had penetrated enough cells of the French resistance movement to know that the BBC would alert them to Overlord by broadcasting certain two-part code phrases; by February 1944, the German radio monitors knew which phrases to listen for. On June 1 the BBC had transmitted 125 of the half-phrases, which meant that the invasion would come within two weeks. Significantly, the phrases were directed only to cells in Brittany and Normandy. These facts were relayed through Gestapo channels to the OKW, and on June 2 Hitler himself was informed. Both Foreign Armies West and Rundstedt's staff ignored the announcement. Luftwaffe meteorologists were forecasting several days of poor weather. The last reconnaissance of the English coastline had shown hardly any landing craft assembled at Dover; but the rest of the south coast had eluded the Luftwaffe reconnaissance. Having satisfied himself that tide conditions in the Straits of Dover, where he expected the invasion, were unfavourable for amphibious landings, Rommel had left for a self-appointed leave in Germany early on June 4 – his wife's birthday was two days later. With the 'Old Man' away, his staff sat down late on June 5, 1944, to an evening of cognac and carousing at their château headquarters.

At about ten P.M. they were momentarily distracted by news that the Fifteenth Army had monitored the BBC broadcasting the *second* code phrase at 9:15 P.M., indicating that an invasion was imminent – indeed, due within twenty-four hours. Fifteenth Army had gone onto full alert.

After checking with Rundstedt's headquarters in Paris, Rommel's Chief of Staff Hans Speidel – one of the anti-Hitler plotters – ruled that there was no need to alert the Seventh Army, guarding the Normandy coastline. Wearied by the alcohol and late night conversation, Speidel and his colleagues went to bed at one A.M.

So, eventually, did Hitler. He still did not suspect that five thousand vessels laden with the enemy were at that very moment bearing down upon the coast of Normandy – just where he had always prophesied.

Part vii: The Worms Turn

RIENZI (to the Nobili): *Ihr staunt? Begreift nicht das Mißlingen der wohlberechnet schönen Tat?*
Meuchelmord!

. . .

Er galt nicht mir, nein er galt Rom,
galt seiner Freiheit, seinem Gesetz!
Sie ekelte dies hohe Fest,
das Roms Erstehung feierte!
Viel edler ist ein Meuchelmord
an dem, der Roma neu erschuf!
Zu End, ihr Römer, sind die Feste,
und das Gericht beginne!

RICHARD WAGNER'S OPERA *Rienzi*



The Allies land in force on the Normandy coastline on June 6, 1944 (US Army)

Man with a Yellow Leather Briefcase

During the night the news of the parachute and glider landings in Normandy hardened, and ships' engines were heard offshore. Goebbels, brought this news a few minutes after four A.M. at Berchtesgaden, exclaimed: 'Thank God, at last! This is the final round.' But the Führer was not awakened; his adjutants consulted with Jodl, who said that the uncertainty would not be dispelled until daybreak anyway. It followed from this that until midday Hitler took no decision on the appeals by Rundstedt to release the OKW panzer reserves to counterattack. By that time wave after wave of landing craft had disgorged tanks and men onto the landing beaches after annihilating naval and air bombardments, and the Seventh Army admitted that the Allies had already established a beachhead west of the Orne River some fifteen miles wide and two miles deep inland.

Thus by the time Hitler's war conference began, the Battle of France was already lost – if Rommel's dictum about defeating the enemy on the beaches had meant anything. The events of the next days disclosed that the movement of any German reserves by day were impossible, so overwhelming was the enemy's air superiority. That the enemy had not been defeated on the beaches was due in part to the weakness of the Atlantic Wall in Normandy: despite all Hitler's warnings since February 1944, the Wall was only 18 percent complete in the Seventh Army's sector, compared with 68 percent in the Channel sector commanded by Salmuth's Fifteenth Army; and in large measure also to the sluggishness of German Intelligence, which had accurate evidence that the invasion would occur on June 6 or 7 but failed to alert all the echelons concerned.

Hitler subsequently ordered an investigation of this renewed Intelligence failure. For some reason neither the OKW, nor the Berghof, nor General Friedrich Dollmann's Seventh Army in Normandy had been warned. This is

all the more inexplicable as German Intelligence in Paris had drawn the proper conclusions from the BBC's secret radio messages. The results of Hitler's investigation are not known; the noisy tread of history approaching soon took his thoughts elsewhere, and if the culprits were either Colonel Georg Hansen, Canaris's successor as chief of military Intelligence, or Colonel Alexis von Roenne, chief of Foreign Armies West, both were shortly executed in another context.

No less serious was the incorrect estimate of initial Allied strength in England. The last information provided to Hitler was that 90 divisions and 22 brigades were under arms in the British Isles; the real number of divisions available for invasion operations was however only 37.

The results of this miscalculation were grave. Throughout June Hitler dared not throw everything into the Normandy battle in case the enemy's 'other' invasion army then appeared elsewhere. Thus while on D-Day morning Rundstedt cautiously adjudged the Normandy operation to be 'quite serious after all,' as the enemy's employment of three airborne divisions and paratroops at the root of the Cherbourg peninsula showed, his morning telegrams to Hitler stressed that he could not yet say with *certainty* whether this was the real invasion or only a decoy.

Hitler finally released the OKW panzer reserves – two divisions – at about 2:30 P.M. He and his generals were supremely confident all that first day. At six A.M., when it had already been light for an hour and a half, General Hans von Salmuth had his Chief of Staff telephone Seventh Army to ask if the enemy had actually landed anywhere yet. The reply was, 'Fleets of troop transports and warships big and small are lying at various points offshore, with masses of landing craft. But so far no landing has yet taken place.' Salmuth told his Chief of Staff, 'So their invasion has miscarried already!' and went back to sleep with a calm mind.

'The news couldn't be better,' was how Hitler welcomed Keitel later that morning. 'As long as they were in Britain we couldn't get at them. Now we have them where we can destroy them.' And to Göring: 'They are landing here – and here: just where we expected them!' 'The invasion is happening just where we expected,' echoed Goebbels in his diary for that day, 'and with exactly the means and methods we've been preparing for. It will be the giddy limit if we can't see them off.'

A Luftwaffe master plan drawn up in February had provided for nineteen squadrons of fighters to be rushed to the west the moment the invasion started; true, the Luftwaffe could raise only 319 sorties over France this

day, compared with the enemy's 10,585; but the Luftwaffe assured Hitler that within three days they would reach maximum strength. On June 7, Richthofen wrote: 'The Channel fighting is still assessed very optimistically by the Luftwaffe High Command.'

Not until June 8 was Göring's euphoria damped. By that evening he still had only five ground-attack aircraft and ninety-five fighters operational against the invasion. He had eight hundred crews available for fighter squadrons, but not enough aircraft.

In the face of the Allied total air supremacy over the beachhead and the artillery bombardment by enemy warships guided by spotter planes, the immediate counterattack by the OKW reserves and the 21st Panzer Division failed. General Guderian acidly summed up the situation to Hitler a few days later: 'Even the greatest bravery of the tank soldiers can't make up for the defection of two other Services.' Gathering his forces, Rundstedt planned to mount an armoured counterattack from under an impenetrable 'wall of fire' put up by the Third Anti-aircraft Corps west of Caën early on the eleventh; but on the evening of the tenth, he had to cancel the attack when an enemy tank assault disrupted the assembling forces.

By June 10 the optimism at the Berghof was evaporating fast. Dönitz conceded: 'The invasion has succeeded. The Second Front has come.'

Loud recriminations began. Göring blamed the navy for having assured everybody that the enemy would not risk his capital ships in a Channel invasion and for objecting to the earlier laying of the secret 'pressure mines' off the French coast. Dönitz bridled: 'Discussion of such matters does not seem opportune at this moment.'

It was obvious that the enemy planned to capture the deep-water port of Cherbourg. If this could not be prevented, warned Rundstedt on June 11, the Führer might be confronted with a situation requiring 'fundamental decisions.' Hitler belatedly ordered two high-grade SS panzer divisions (the 9th and 10th) – which had been standing by to attack a Russian salient near Kolomea – to entrain immediately for the Normandy front instead. 'If I had had the 9th and 10th SS panzer divisions in the west,' he would grumble at the end of August, 'all this would probably never have happened.'

On the afternoon of June 6, the OKW had ordered the flying-bomb attack against London to begin. The next six days had been spent bringing up the heavy steel catapult rigs from their camouflaged dumps and transporting them to the sixty-four prepared launching sites along the Channel coast. By

the eleventh it was clear that all was not well. Despite this the OKW insisted that the attack begin the next night.

How Hitler had thirsted for the moment! By day he had watched the American bomber squadrons glittering high overhead on their way from Italy to targets in southern Germany. By night the British flew the other way into Austria and Hungary. Often the red glow of fires burning in Munich could be seen reflected in the skies. His housekeeper had begged him to move his town apartment's contents to somewhere safer, but he had refused. 'Frau Winter,' he had said, 'we must set an example.' In the raid on Munich on June 9 Eva Braun's close friend, Heini Handschuhmacher, the well-known actor, was killed with his wife. Eva returned in tears from the funeral and pathetically described the misery caused by the raids. 'Hitler listened with a mournful face,' wrote a secretary later, 'swore vengeance, and promised that he would repay everything one hundredfold with the Luftwaffe's new inventions.'

Thus, on the night of June 12, the flying-bomb attack on London began. The result was a fiasco: of ten V-1s catapulted, four crashed at once, two vanished without trace, one demolished a railway bridge in London, and the other three impacted elsewhere. Göring anxiously informed Hitler that Milch – the same field marshal who had deceived them over the Me-262 jet aircraft – was the author of the V-1. Two more days passed while the catapult rigs were properly adjusted. Late on June 15 the offensive was resumed, and no fewer than 244 V-1s were launched against London by noon the next day; spotter aircraft reported fires sweeping the British capital.

The new campaign took the British completely by surprise. It panicked Eisenhower, it stung Churchill into ordering poison-gas raids on German cities (he was overruled). Bombing the V-1 sites now assumed a priority above the destruction of cities, aircraft factories, and oil refineries.

Hitler telephoned Milch to congratulate him in person, and a few days later he ordered Speer to throttle back A-4 rocket production to release manpower and materials to increase V-1 and jet-bomber production.

THE FAILURE of his invasion defences faced Hitler with momentous issues. General Schmundt warned Goebbels that the Allied beachhead in Normandy, though still contained, was swelling like a malignant tumour.

Hitler betook himself in person to the western front. Late on June 16 four Focke-Wulf Condors flew him with his staff to France, while the entire fighter force along the route was grounded and anti-aircraft batteries

were forbidden to fire in order to avoid a mishap. After dawn the next morning, while Luftwaffe fighter planes patrolled the highway, he drove to 'W2,' an unused Führer's Headquarters built near Soissons, to confer with Rundstedt and Rommel.

His immediate purpose was to restore the two field marshals' confidence, shaken by the enemy's success in consolidating his bridgehead in Normandy.

Rommel spoke first, briefing Hitler frankly on his dwindling forces in Normandy. Reinforcements were not getting through, and the Allied airforces and warships were bombarding everything within range. His troops were fighting 'like the devil,' the official record shows him as stating, even his seventeen- and eighteen-year-olds – 'like young tigers.' But against the Anglo-American combination of brute force and sophisticated weaponry it could only be a matter of days before the front caved in. Field Marshal von Rundstedt followed, asking permission to withdraw his forces up the Cherbourg peninsula into the port and fortress.

Hitler agreed at once but ordered the battle group to fight for every inch as it withdrew; Rommel was to nominate a 'particularly capable' commandant for Cherbourg. 'The fortress,' dictated Hitler, 'is to hold out as long as it can – if possible until about mid-July.' Speidel telephoned these orders at ten A.M. to Army Group headquarters: 'A one-step retreat [into Cherbourg] will not take place.' The withdrawing troops were to delay the American advance by obstacles, minefields, and deception; work on demolishing the port facilities was to commence at once.

Hitler's own proposal for the main Normandy front was a counterattack by four SS panzer divisions from west of Caën and Falaise; until then there was to be a clear Schwerpunkt east of the River Orne, established at the expense of the First and Nineteenth armies but not of Salmuth's Fifteenth Army in the Pas de Calais, where Rommel and Rundstedt both still expected the 'second invasion' to come. Hitler assured them that the navy and Luftwaffe would concentrate on the enemy's warships and shipping tonnage; the new 'pressure mines' would be deployed for the first time.

SEIZING ONE moment of privacy, when the stenographers were momentarily detached from the discussions by an air raid warning, Rommel ventured to hint to his Führer that 'politics would soon have to come into play, otherwise the situation in the west will deteriorate too far for salvaging.' Hitler snapped (according to his own recollection, some weeks later): 'The time isn't ripe for a political decision.' Besides, it was no concern of Rommel's.

The Führer left Soissons – near the battlefield where he had won his Iron Cross as a corporal a quarter of a century before – late that afternoon.

Back at the Berghof the next day the news was that the Americans had reached the west coast of the Cherbourg peninsula. At eleven P.M. Hitler inquired, 'They are stating quite bluntly that they got through. Now, have they or haven't they!' '*Jawohl*,' conceded Jodl. 'They got through.'

Now more buoyant and confident, still glowing with the faith radiated by his Führer, Rommel wrote his next report in tones of a new-found optimism: the enemy had landed twenty-five divisions, but with heavy casualties; the local French population were still overwhelmingly on the German side. Admiral Friedrich Ruge, his naval aide, marvelled at Rommel's new faith and surmised in his diary that Hitler must possess 'sheer magnetism.'

Hitler seriously counted on the secret mines to foil the 'second' invasion; on June 18 he insisted that a barrage also be laid outside Le Havre – 'so they can't stage a repeat performance there.' General Korten appealed for the immediate appearance of twelve to fifteen Me-262 jet bombers at the battle front and for three more to be used as high-speed photographic reconnaissance planes. Production of the Heinkel 177 heavy bomber was to be stepped up as well. On June 20, Hitler accepted Speer's proposal that all aircraft production be transferred to his armaments ministry.

EVER SINCE the invasion began, Hitler had drawn comfort from what seemed to him the significant failure of the Russians to assist the Allies by attacking German-held sectors of the eastern front. But Stalin would not postpone his summer offensive forever. In May, Hitler had detected an enemy Schwerpunkt at Kovel; Model had wanted throughout May to promote an attack here, and the Fifty-sixth Panzer Corps – with virtually all Army Group Centre's tanks – had been transferred to him 'temporarily' for this purpose. On June 11 however Hitler cancelled the Kovel attack when divisions had to be switched to the Normandy front. The upshot was that of his forty-five original divisions, Field Marshal Busch (Army Group Centre) had only thirty-seven left to defend an eight hundred-mile perimeter should the Russians now attack.

Almost complete radio silence had descended on the Russian front. Intuitively, Hitler suspected that Stalin would now go all-out for Army Group Centre; throughout May, however, General Zeitzler's eastern Intelligence expert, Colonel Gehlen, had postulated the main Soviet Schwerpunkt opposite Model's Army Group North-Ukraine. Consistent with what he called

'the Balkans solution,' even when Russian reinforcements were reported moving northward from there to the centre, Gehlen would go no further on June 13 than to suggest that the Red Army might launch an initial attack on Army Group Centre as a holding operation. The next day, both Zeitzler and his chief of operations, General Heusinger, re-emphasised this view: the Soviet Schwerpunkt would for the first time come up against a German Schwerpunkt – Model's army group. Zeitzler rejected all the conflicting evidence.

On June 17, the Luftwaffe High Command (OKL) telephoned him directly to warn of evidence of an imminent Red Army offensive near Smolensk. A captured Russian cypher officer revealed that three corps of fighter planes had just arrived at Smolensk; over 4,500 aircraft were suddenly confronting Army Group Centre. On June 18 and 19 Hitler called for the Fourth Air Corps, the last great air reserve in the east, to bomb the Gomel armies, and he refused to transfer the corps to Normandy for minelaying operations for just this reason. As late as June 20 General Zeitzler was still obstinately maintaining that the real Soviet offensive would shortly come against Model's front. Hitler ignored his advice. From the Berghof, the Luftwaffe was informed the next day: 'The general appreciation is that the expected attack on Army Group Centre begins tomorrow.'

Goebbels came to spend three hours with Hitler on June 21, 1944 – a grey and rainy day up here at the Berghof. He pleaded to be put in charge of a total war effort, and blamed the timeserving soldiers like Keitel and Fromm for their present difficulties. If he were in charge, he promised, he could wring one million extra combat soldiers out of the Wehrmacht's 'tail.' Hitler said only that if things ever got out of hand, then, but only then, he would send for Dr. Goebbels. When the minister hinted at the need to do a deal with the British, the Führer scoffed that Britain would be totally destroyed by the war, adding nastily: 'They've had it coming to them.'

His guest at the Berghof war conferences on this day and the next, June 21 and 22, was General Dietl, commander of the German Twentieth Army in Lapland. Since February Hitler had been aware of secret Soviet-Finnish armistice talks, but these had collapsed in March as the Russian terms were too harsh. Suspicious that her all-too democratic government might abandon the war at any moment, Hitler had stopped arms deliveries to Finland in April, and when Marshal Mannerheim promised him in May that the weapons would never end up in Russian hands Hitler had privately dis-

missed this 'platonic assurance' as quite valueless. Mannerheim's determined resistance to the Russian offensive of June 10 impressed him, however, and two days later Hitler decided: 'As long as the Finns keep warring we'll support them; the moment they start jawing, the deliveries will be stopped.' He ordered Göring to rush a fighter squadron to Helsinki and Guderian to supply a battalion of assault guns.

At the evening conference on June 21 he nonetheless expressed disappointment that Mannerheim had withdrawn his troops so far. Dietl slammed his fist on the table, and dismissed Hitler's criticisms as typical of a 'chairbound general' unencumbered by any expert knowledge of the terrain; he would fly back to Finland, he said, and support Mannerheim to the hilt. After the general left the Great Hall, Hitler turned to his gaping staff and exclaimed, 'Gentlemen – that's the kind of general I like!'

Dietl and his corps commanders had spent two days listening to speeches by Keitel, Rosenberg, and Himmler at the political indoctrination college at Sonthofen. The next afternoon, on June 22, the same generals listened to a secret speech by Hitler at the Obersalzberg, on the nature of war and revolution.

To frequent applause, the Führer expounded his philosophy that in war as in nature the weakest must go to the wall, and that a nation which failed to recognise this would as surely vanish from the face of the earth as had countless prehistoric species.

'Nor can there occur a revolution in the Germany of today,' he said at one point. 'The Jews have gone; and the born leaders I have already singled out long ago, regardless of their origins, for positions of authority.'

If any man now turned to the outside world against Germany, then a death sentence would be meted out to him. The generals fiercely applauded Hitler's image of the 'little worm' of an infantryman in a slit trench, confronting ten or more Russian tanks with only a grenade in his hands, while democrats at home plotted his country's surrender.

'How can one expect the brave little rifleman to die for his country on the battlefield, while at the same moment others at home are doing no less than plotting the betrayal of these men's sacrifices!'

When people asked him. 'How easy is your conscience now?' he could only respond that often he could not sleep, but that he never for one instant doubted that Germany would survive every danger. 'I still have not made my ultimate appeal to the German nation,' he reminded the generals, and they responded with frenetic applause and shouts of 'Heil!'

the plane carrying Colonel-General Dietl back to Lapland crashed a few hours later, killing everybody aboard. Agonised by the fear that this loss might finally prompt Finland's defection, Hitler ordered absolute secrecy until Ribbentrop's mission in Helsinki – securing the Finnish government's unconditional agreement to reject any further Soviet peace proposals – was accomplished. Dietl's generals were quietly buried by the Party in Carinthia; Hitler himself attended the state funeral at Salzburg on July 1.

The simultaneous loss of Cherbourg was not only bitter but also a mystery to Hitler. Jodl had spoken well of General Karl Wilhelm von Schlieben, the port's commandant, and Hitler had radioed him on June 21: 'I expect you to fight this battle as Gneisenau once fought in the defence of Kolberg.' But that night the general called for urgent supplies to be airlifted to him, and Hitler caustically commented at the next day's noon conference: 'Two years they've had to stock up Cherbourg, yet within two days of being cut off they are already clamouring for air supplies.' Only now did he learn that far fewer German troops were in the port than he had ordered.

Hitler considered desperate measures – a counter-thrust into the rear of the American corps attacking the port, which Rundstedt rejected out of hand, or an airlift of three thousand paratroops. General Student was willing, but the OKL was not, unless a full moon could be provided. Hitler fumed: 'It must be possible to put down three thousand troops in our own territory!' But it was not. On the afternoon of June 25 an Anglo-American battle fleet appeared offshore and began blasting the port. At 7:32 p.m. Schlieben's radio operators broadcast: 'The final battle for Cherbourg has begun. General is fighting with his troops. Long live Führer and Germany.' Then the sign-off prefix, and 'Heil the Führer, Heil Germany!'

'if people now say, "Look, the British are in Cherbourg," I reply, "To you that is the beginning of their reconquest of France, but I look at it differently."' Thus Hitler pacified his generals. 'After all, we already hounded them out of France once; so Cherbourg is just the last ground they still hold. When war broke out, it was not we who were in France, but they . . . and the enemy was barely a hundred miles from Berlin, standing on our eastern frontiers.'

In a way it was fortunate that the Germans were now hypnotised by the western front, for the events in the east were far grimmer. The Russian offensive on June 22 had begun with deceptive mildness: company-strength infantry attacks on Army Group Centre (Field Marshal Ernst Busch) left

two minor breaches torn temporarily on either side of Vitebsk. Zeitzler had continued to direct Hitler's attention to the apparent threat to Army Groups South- and North-Ukraine. But then great Russian tank formations had appeared, and poured through the breaches, while overwhelming operations by ground-attack aircraft had neutralised the German artillery; the Sixth Air Force had only forty fighter aircraft operational that day. By June 25 the Red Army was about to engulf the entire Fourth Army and most of the Ninth. Believing that disaster could still be staved off, Hitler refused frantic appeals by Busch and Zeitzler to abandon the 'fortified places' Vitebsk, Orsha, Mogilev, and Bobruisk while there was still time; thus Busch lost six divisions tied down in their defence. When he came to the Berghof he appealed for Army Group North to be pulled back too, so that strength could be released to his own front. Now however that Mannerheim had just pledged Finland's loyalty, Hitler refused to let him down like that.

Himmler blamed this 'incomprehensible collapse' on Busch. 'In my view the Army Group's command was too soft and war-weary,' he wrote on June 26. Hitler evidently agreed, for two days later, as a penalty for failure, he sacked the field marshal. Others would follow Busch into the wilderness that same week, and at its end, Hitler was even his own Chief of General Staff, for Zeitzler had also disappeared, either sick or sickened by events.

Hostility toward Zeitzler had mounted at the Berghof. The final clash came on June 30; he appealed to Hitler to withdraw Army Group North to the shorter Dvina River line while there was yet time. Hitler would not hear of it; to throw Finland into the arms of Stalin would deprive Germany of her last nickel supplies. 'I bear the responsibility, not you,' he acidly reminded Zeitzler. Undaunted, Zeitzler told him that now that the invasion of France had manifestly succeeded, the war could not be won; he suggested the appointment of the Reichsführer SS Himmler as 'dictator' to put teeth into the 'total war' campaign. Total war alone would release the manpower the eastern front now needed. Hitler felt that Zeitzler's nerve had deserted him and he commented spitefully on the defeatism of the General Staff. Zeitzler left without saluting and suffered a complete nervous and physical collapse later that day. He turned up in Dr. Weber's surgery, cadging a medical certificate, and Hitler never saw him again. He struggled on without any Chief of General Staff for the following three weeks.

Rundstedt, the Commander in Chief West, was also a marked man. For several days – following June 26 – Hitler invited Field Marshal von Kluge as Rundstedt's heir-apparent to sit in on the Berghof war conferences and

thus steep himself in Hitler's forced optimism. Hitler introduced Kluge to the murderous V-1 flying bomb and explained its strategic purpose. The enemy was already forced to keep 250 fighter aircraft on patrol against the V-1s; to add an element of confusion, Hitler had ordered them painted with the same black-and-white stripes as the Allied invasion aircraft.

On June 26 he stepped up the V-1 saturation of London, still hoping to force the Allies to stage a disastrous second invasion in the Pas de Calais; and when the OKL suggested filling 250 V-1s a month with an extra destructive aluminised explosive, Trialen, Hitler responded by ordering ten times that number. 'The all-out bombing attacks on our catapult sites are sufficient proof of the effectiveness of our weapons!' two officers of the V-1 regiment assured Hitler at the Berghof on June 29. That night the two-thousandth flying bomb was launched against London.

The Intelligence forwarded from Rommel's headquarters was less heartening. About thirty enemy divisions had already landed in Normandy, these reports said, and at least sixty-seven more were standing by in England.* This phantom invasion army overshadowed Hitler's conferences.

On June 29 Hitler finally accepted that Germany was on the defensive in France too. Rommel's primary concern had to be to prevent the enemy from breaking through into France's open countryside.

The main counterattack on the beachhead was doomed to failure unless certain elementary requirements were first met. These Hitler spelled out on June 29, first to Rundstedt and Rommel and then, that evening, to Dönitz, Göring, and Sperrle. First, the enemy's offshore battle fleet and transport ships had to be driven off or sunk; Hitler proposed saturating the coastal waters with the new secret mines, sowing them with 'bulldog tenacity.' 'It's far more effective to sink an entire ship's cargo than to have to deal with the troops and equipment piecemeal after they have been unloaded,' he pointed out. He recommended the ruthless employment of every weapon available – circling torpedoes, submarines with snorkel breathing-tubes, radio-controlled launches packed with high explosives, and V-1 flying bombs manned by suicide-pilots. (About a thousand V-1s with cockpits would be found after the war at a depot south of Hamburg.)

* Only fifteen divisions were still in England, awaiting shipment to Normandy. It is not clear whether Hitler was being deliberately misled by anti-Nazis or by the faulty intelligence of General Staff officers.

The second requirement was for motor transport; if necessary, trucks and buses would have to be ruthlessly requisitioned from the French.

Third, no proposed counterattack could survive long without logistics support; Hitler asked the Luftwaffe to establish 'convoy highways' to the bridgehead, heavily protected by anti-aircraft artillery and fighter cover.

How often in later months would Hitler bemoan the fact that he had to occupy himself with even the most trivial matters; the fact that his Commander in Chief West had on his own initiative reached none of these relatively simple decisions was a persuasive argument against appointing a Commander in Chief East as well. Privately, Hitler blamed the women of France and the good food and liquor for softening his armies in the west. Rundstedt's fatalism was powerfully expressed on July 1, when he submitted his own view that no counterattack would ever be possible, and advised giving up the bridgehead at Caën – the main enemy Schwerpunkt of attack – and withdrawing beyond the range of the enemy ships' artillery. He enclosed a similar appreciation by General Leo Geyr von Schweppenburg.

Jodl soberly pointed out that the Rundstedt–Geyr proposals would be the first step toward a catastrophic evacuation of France. There were only two choices: either evacuation, or fighting this decisive battle where they stood at the first possible opportunity. Late that day Hitler signalled to Rommel: 'The present lines are to be held. Any further enemy breakthrough is to be prevented by tenacious defence or by local counterattacks.' Rundstedt was dismissed – Hitler sent one of his army adjutants, Colonel Heinrich Borgmann, to decorate him with the Oak Leaves and hand him the ominous blue envelope in person – and Kluge took his place.

Hitler thus learned the hard way that the key to victory lay in the air defences – just as the British had in 1940. In four months however he hoped to recover fighter supremacy. He wrote off his entire bomber arm. His final discontent with this had begun smouldering on the twentieth, while discussing with Milch and Saur ways of reaching the Me-262 production target of one thousand a month in the shortest time.

His real anger however blazed up against the huge twin-engined Heinkel 177 heavy bomber a few days later: it was backward, plagued by faults, and suffered appalling casualties. Its fuel consumption was so high that there was no future for it in a Germany clearly entering upon a crippling fuel crisis. Worse still, Hitler had learned on June 25 that the squadrons would not see the four-engined version of the Heinkel 177 before 1946. He tel-

ephoned Saur and asked, 'How many fighters can I build for one Heinkel 177?' Saur replied: 'Five thousand workers making two hundred Heinkel 177s a month could produce a thousand fighters more.' At the next day's war conference, Hitler reiterated: 'What matters in our situation is to build fighters and still more fighters – and high-speed bombers too. We've got to get that air umbrella over our home base and infantrymen! And if that means going without a strategic bomber force for years on end, then so be it!'

At a midnight conference two days later, Hitler happened to ask the general's Chief of Staff, Colonel Wolfgang Thomale, if he had seen the Luftwaffe in France that day. 'No,' the colonel replied. 'That is, apart from two fighters between Paris and Chartres.'

Such was the background to Hitler's final decision to scrap most bomber production, announced on July 1. General Koller forcefully argued that if only fighters were produced, there would be no minelaying, no guided bombs, no air launching of the V-1, and no Fourth Air Corps operations in the east. Thus Hitler's axe fell only on the Heinkel 177 – but that decision was final.

The next day he asked Saur on the phone how fighter production would now rise. 'In July,' came the reply, 'I hope to top the three thousand mark. In August thirty-three hundred, and then rising by three hundred a month to forty-five hundred fighters in December.' As he replaced the receiver, Hitler recognised that the strategic issue was now this: could the battlefronts be kept from the Reich long enough for these figures to be attained? Much would depend on the courage and conviction of his field marshals.

He lectured Kesselring on this at the Berghof on July 3. After weeks of unremitting, hard-fought retreats, the field marshal had brought the enemy's advance in Italy to a standstill. General Koller wrote that day:

> The Führer explains just why we have to fight for every square metre of ground – because for us gaining time is everything now. The longer we can hold the enemy off at the periphery the better. Perhaps the individual soldier or NCO may not grasp why he is asked to fight in the Abruzzi mountains instead of the Apennines, but his Supreme Commander must understand why and comply, because the interests of Germany's fight transcend those of the individual soldier.
>
> Kesselring fears that he will be breached in his present position if he holds it too long, and he wants to fall back on the Apennine line early on. But the Führer wants that postponed as long as possible. . . The Führer

again emphasises how enormously different the situation would be if we still had the air superiority we used to.

We are going to win it back – at least partially – but for that we need time, and we must not give up ground before then.

In the east, the catastrophic eclipse of Army Group Centre was all but complete. At the midday conference on July 6, 1944, the Führer again rejected Model's view that four divisions could be extracted from Army Group North by ordering its withdrawal; all that would happen, he said, was that the group would lose its fortified positions and its heavy guns and equipment. Turning to General Heusinger, Hitler quietly asked what the disaster had cost them during the last two weeks in the Centre and was told: 'The overall losses will run to twenty-eight divisions.' 'I don't mind saying,' Hitler reminisced later, 'it would be hard to imagine a graver crisis. . . When Field Marshal Model took over, Army Group Centre was all gap. There was more gap than front – but then at last there was more front than gap.'

He had however given Model a more realistic directive than had been given to his predecessor: the 'fortified places' were only to be held long enough for a cohesive new front to be established farther back.

At first the cause of this catastrophe was a mystery. Zeitzler's faulty strategic appreciation alone was not to blame; more serious was the Luftwaffe's virtual impotence, paralysed by its first serious fuel shortage. Most ominous of the causes was the sudden war weariness of leading army officers to continue the fight. As General Jodl put it soon after: 'Practically the entire Army Group Centre surrendered to the enemy this summer.'

There was evidence that Soviet-trained 'Seydlitz officers' had infiltrated the battle zone in German uniforms, and issued false orders to sabotage the army group's defence. After the Fourth Army surrendered on July 8, Hitler was shown an order signed by General Vinzenz Müller* of the Twelfth Army Corps in which that army's soldiers were instructed to put an 'end to the pointless bloodshed':

The Russian command have promised (a) to care for the wounded and (b) to let officers retain daggers and medals, and other ranks their deco-

*Vinzenz Müller, fifty, was one of the little circle of dissidents around Hans Oster as early as 1939. After the war, he lived in the Soviet zone of Germany, where his memoirs, *Ich fand das wahre Vaterland (I Found the True Fatherland)*, were published.

rations. All weapons and equipment are to be collected and handed over in good condition.

Two weeks later Müller and fifteen fellow generals of Army Group Centre signed a pamphlet denigrating their colleagues' continued defence of the Reich. Shortly afterward, the same generals, abetted by Paulus and Seydlitz, appealed to Army Group North officers to disobey Hitler's 'murderous orders' to stand fast. 'Now,' said Hitler, 'I am beginning to understand how such frightful things could have happened in the Centre.'

The collapse had brought the Red Army to the very frontiers of East Prussia. Hordes of weary refugees had fled before them, swamping the province. 'When will the first task force of fifteen Me-262s begin operations?' the Führer impatiently asked on July 2.

He had still not abandoned hope. Late on July 5 he decided to create fifteen new 'blocking divisions' at an unprecedented speed to act as an emergency breakwater in the east. He announced this to Himmler, Speer, Buhle, and half a dozen others at the Berghof the next day. Speer's arms factories must contribute fifty thousand of their young workers. The Reichsführer SS would temporarily supervise the training of six such divisions. In addition, ten panzer brigades were to be created, each with perhaps fifty tanks.

Hitler instructed Saur to manufacture the necessary extra infantry equipment. At this urgent conference, and an additional one called toward midnight, Hitler noticed the same one-armed colonel who had been at the Berghof a month before – a black patch on one eye, and two fingers missing from his one good arm; Schmundt had selected this officer, who seemed particularly fanatical, to be Chief of Staff to General Fromm, a man patently weary of his job as commander of the Replacement Army. This time the colonel was armed with a bulging yellow leather briefcase.

On July 9, Hitler flew back for just one day to Rastenburg. A telegram had come from Gauleiter Koch: the Führer's personal presence in East Prussia was essential to restore civilian morale. With him, Hitler took Himmler, Keitel, Dönitz, Jodl, and Korten, while from the eastern front came Model, General Friessner (of Army Group North), and Greim. The Wolf's Lair was in a turmoil of noise and activity, for the strengthening of the bunkers was far from complete. Hitler again ruled against any weakening of Army Group North. He promised the first new divisions to Model by July 17, and ex-

plained how he intended to replace the Centre's lost twenty-eight divisions: some of the new divisions would arrive in the second half of July; three refurbished Crimea divisions would follow, joined by two from Norway and the 6th and 19th panzer divisions. Gauleiter Koch and the Party were to be put in charge of fortifying the East Prussian frontier.

Hitler flew back to the Berghof that same evening, his mind at peace. General Korten had promised that the first four Me-262 jet bombers would attack the invasion area in ten days. 'The Allies only like advancing when air power is on their side,' said Hitler. 'That is why everything now depends on our fighter production. We must keep it top-secret and start stockpiling in a big way. Then just watch the enemy gape when we turn the tables on them four months from now – as far as air supremacy is concerned!'

Yet suddenly a mood of despair gripped him. At the Berghof on July 11 the news was that both Model and Friessner now admitted that two days earlier they might have been overoptimistic. The colonel with the yellow briefcase had again come, to discuss the new blocking-divisions – now referred to as 'grenadier divisions'; but as Himmler did not appear the colonel left, his business uncompleted. On July 13 Hitler addressed the generals and staff officers selected for the fifteen new divisions and the ten panzer brigades, perhaps one hundred and sixty men. Marshal Konev's attack on Army Group North-Ukraine had begun. East of East Prussia, Vilna had fallen and Hitler was airlifting SS men to defend Kovno, the next town.

The next morning, July 14, he decided abruptly to fly straight back to Rastenburg. The battle for Vilna, the last bastion before East Prussia, had begun. The defeatism in the General Staff had shocked him, and he felt that only his presence in East Prussia could prevent a rout.

Several weeks later he would tell Morell that before leaving the Berghof he had had a 'premonition' that his life would be very soon in danger. 'Saying good-bye to E. he had told her of this,' noted Morell, 'as well as somebody else, and he had made the appropriate dispositions.'*

Desolately, Hitler wandered through the Berghof rooms with Eva and the young wives of his surgeon Dr. Brandt and adjutant Colonel von Below, pausing in front of each familiar painting or tapestry as though taking leave of an old friend. At last, the Führer bid the ladies too farewell. Frau Brandt began to weep. Frau von Below said reassuringly, 'But, mein Führer – you will be coming back in a week or two, won't you?' Hitler did not reply.

* David Irving (ed.), *The Secret Diaries of Hitler's Doctor*, entry of November 9, 1944.

‘Do You Recognise My Voice?’

As Hitler’s Condor touched down at Rastenburg airfield, thousands of Todt Organisation labourers were still working on the Führer’s headquarters. The old site used for ‘Barbarossa’ was now barely recognisable: the mammoth bunkers rearing up out of the trees had been expertly camouflaged against enemy reconnaissance; there was turf and there were trees on the flat roofs. ‘How beautiful it is out here,’ Karl Thöt, a stenographer, noted in his diary. ‘The whole site is resplendent with luscious greenery. The woods breathe a magnificent tranquillity. The wooden hutments have meantime been heavily bricked-in to afford protection against bomb splinters.’ The noon war conferences were temporarily transferred to one of these grey-painted huts, at one end of which a forty-foot-long conference room had been created by simply knocking down two partition walls; the room thus had windows on three sides – it was light and airy and filled with the fragrances of the surrounding woods.

Poor health was again bothering the Führer. On this day, July 14, 1944, Professor Morell noted after examining him: ‘Influenza and conjunctivitis in both eyes. Shampoo got into his left eye, smarting badly.’ The physician soothed the pain with a standard cocaine–adrenaline solution. This was the least of Hitler’s woes. For the first time Keitel and Fromm had opened discussions with Bormann on command relationships in the likely event that the Reich itself became a battleground. At long last too Hitler had bowed to pressure to *implement* the doctrine of total war.

Here at the Wolf’s Lair he received from Dr. Goebbels a long letter protesting at the continued under-exploitation of the Reich’s vast manpower resources. ‘At this moment, with East Prussia preparing to defend her soil, every postal delivery in Berlin brings fresh invitations to official receptions, to parties, to games, or to displays.’ Goebbels pleaded with

Hitler: 'Give absolute power to one man you can trust for every problem requiring a rapid solution.' Ingratiatingly he added: 'Every time I see you, I look to see what your health is like. When you came to Berlin for the state funeral of General Hube – risking death from American fighter aircraft – I was shaking with fear, I confess. . . You alone, mein Führer, are our guarantee of victory.'

This was unquestionably true. No man possessed the authority over the German people that Hitler did, even at this gloomy pass in their fortunes. If he succumbed now, nothing would halt the Soviet avalanche – least of all his querulous generals. Yet the Germans were still waiting for Hitler's ultimate appeal. Goebbels besought him: 'By calling all England to arms after Dunkirk did Churchill thereby condemn her to die? And Stalin – when he proclaimed during our advance on Moscow "Better to die on your feet than live on your knees!" – did he imperil the whole USSR?'

'OUR RETURN was very timely,' wrote Martin Bormann privately on July 15. 'The Führer has had to come here in person to stiffen the often shamefully weak-kneed attitude of the army's officers.' Hearing that the nervous General Ftaff had evacuated five thousand of its officers from East Prussia to the west, Goebbels remarked in his diary: 'I'd like to kick out every cowardly man-jack of them.' The optimism of the 'Party faithfuls' like himself was certainly limitless. Himmler, who visited Hitler that day, was soon writing to Kaltenbrunner: 'How are we going to rule and pacify Russia when we reconquer large parts of her, as we certainly shall in the next years?' Hitler had ordered a new defensive line rapidly built along the entire eastern front, following the rivers San and Vistula to the Warsaw bridgehead, and then the Narev and a line forward of the Reich frontier to the Baltic. The fifteen new 'grenadier divisions' ordered by Hitler were being raised in the Reich. The army had issued the first order over General Stieff's signature on July 8 but Hitler wanted more urgency and now, on July 15, he summoned to the Wolf's Lair both General Fromm and his Chief of Staff – the colonel with the now familiar yellow briefcase.

Most midday war conferences here were interminably long; but this conference lasted only half an hour, from 1:10 to 1:40 P.M., as a special session on the reconstitution of the shattered eastern front followed until 2:20 P.M. Hitler cold-heartedly laid down that the refugee families were to be stopped east of the new line and the able-bodied members diverted to the fortification works. 'Things are pretty grim here,' wrote Martin Bormann

three days later: 'The Russians are at Augustov near the East Prussian frontier. . . The new divisions still lack the necessary antitank weapons! . . . We have plenty of worries, and it's a good thing that the Führer is here.'

On July 19, Hitler ordered two East Prussian divisions raised from the province's elderly home guard. In this connection Fromm's Chief of Staff was again detailed to report to Hitler the next day.

IN FRANCE the Allies were mercilessly bombing the Germans still containing the beachhead. Flame-throwing tanks were incinerating the inmates of the stubborn pillbox bunkers. Late on July 17, Field Marshal Kluge telephoned Hitler with the shattering news that Rommel's car had been strafed by an Allied plane; the field marshal would be in the hospital for many months. The next day two thousand bombers hit the stronghold he had built at Caën. Over two thousand French civilians were found dead in the city's ruins.

Hitler's world was thus beginning to crash. In Italy the German Fourteenth Army pulled out of Leghorn (Livorno). In Denmark Communist resistance cells were waging overt partisan warfare. In Hungary too there were ominous rumblings. Hungary was now flatly refusing to deport the Jews from Budapest; instead, Horthy announced, a general would be bringing Hitler a letter on July 21 .

The reasons for Hitler's discontent were therefore manifold. His irritation was such that on July 18 he dismissed one of his adjutants, SS Colonel Fritz Darges, transferring him to the eastern front because of a minor incident involving a winged insect in the conference hut.

Lunching in his bunker that day with his secretary Christa Schroeder, he was clearly ill at ease. Once he exclaimed, 'Nothing must happen to me now, because there is nobody else who could take over!'

He had premonitions of trouble and commented uneasily, 'There is something in the air.' Two days later he admitted to Mussolini that he had first experienced these forebodings during the recent flight back to the Wolf's Lair. On July 29 he was to say, 'I admit I long expected an assassination attempt.' But from which quarter? The field marshals or the generals?

Some, like General Fellgiebel, Chief of Signals, were conspicuous by their hostile remarks, but as Jodl was to note on the twenty-fourth: 'The Führer always good-naturedly overlooked them and held a protecting hand over them.'

Alternatively, the enemy might launch a paratroop attack on the Wolf's Lair itself; Himmler discussed this possibility with Hitler on the fifteenth.

An entire battalion was concealed in the woods with tanks and anti-aircraft guns.

Even in Rommel's absence Army Group B still considered that although the enemy had landed forty divisions in France there were forty more available in Britain. By late on July 18 however the enemy breakthrough east of Caën called for urgent remedial action. Kluge telephoned the next morning to demand that the 116th Panzer Division be withdrawn from the Fifteenth Army and thrown into the breach. Hitler authorised this immediately, thus accepting for the first time that the Fifteenth Army was waiting for an invasion of the Pas de Calais that might never come. He instructed Field Marshal Kluge to take command of Rommel's army group as well. At noon on the nineteenth Kluge telephoned Keitel: 'Without doubt we've got a crisis on our hands here,' he said. He was planning to address his senior commanders immediately behind the battle-front. 'Good luck,' said Keitel. 'Take care of yourself!' Hitler trusted Kluge.

AT 11:45 A.M. – it was now the twentieth – Morell came to give him the usual injections and administer drops into Hitler's reddened right eye. After lunch Mussolini was expected here at the Wolf's Lair. For political reasons Hitler had earlier conceded to him the right to raise four new divisions of troops; but on July 19, Hitler had tentatively decided to disband all four divisions. On consideration, he felt that no good could come of them and that their German training personnel and equipment were badly needed for the new German divisions. He had sent to Bodenschatz to put this suggestion to Marshal Graziani.

Now, on the twentieth, Hitler was undecided about seeing Mussolini. He ordered the Italian's train shunted around the East Prussian countryside and his regular one P.M. war conference brought forward thirty minutes. Schaub arrived about 12:25 P.M. to tell him that the officers were assembled. As Hitler walked the forty yards to the grey conference hut, he saw Warlimont and other officers waiting outside; the day was oppressively hot and the windows of the conference hut – it had been Fritz Todt's office – were wide open. Sonnleitner asked what time he should fix the appointment for Mussolini; Hitler replied that he desired to be sure of the situation on the East Prussian frontier first; he could not allow Mussolini's life to be endangered. General Heusinger, standing to Hitler's right, began briefing him on the eastern front. Shortly afterward, Keitel arrived, accompanied by General Buhle and Fromm's Chief of Staff, the one-armed, one-eyed

colonel with the yellow briefcase. 'Mein Führer,' Keitel announced, 'this is Colonel Count Schenk von Stauffenberg, who is to brief you on the new divisions.' Sonnleitner, clutching his sheaf of telegrams and intercepted Italian embassy dispatches, saw Stauffenberg adopt his usual stiff, almost fanatical, Prussian posture, flinging his (left) arm up in a Hitler salute before shaking hands. Hitler shook the colonel's mutilated hand, then resumed his seat on a wicker stool. Once, he asked for a detail, but it appeared that the colonel had stepped outside. There were now twenty-four men in the room. Hitler leaned across the maps, propping himself on his right elbow; there was a bunch of pencils in his right hand, and a magnifying glass in his left.

FOR HITLER this was the dividing instant between an old world and a new. A blinding yellow flash engulfed him as two pounds of explosives detonated less than six feet away. His impression was that the blast came from just to the right of Colonel Heinz Brandt. 'The swine are bombing us!' thought Hitler – he heard a distinct double-crack. Opaque smoke filled the room. He found himself lying near the left doorjamb; he was covered with ceiling lathes, glass-wool insulation, and timbers; he could feel his hair and clothes on fire, and his right elbow was hurting savagely. As the choking fumes parted, his smarting eyes made out faces contorted by screams of pain which he could not hear. His aides and adjutants fled, bolting through the doors and windows. Was there gunfire? He could not hear, he was deafened by the blast. Had a Soviet paratroop attack begun? If he tried to get out of the windows he might blunder straight into the enemy's guns.

He painfully extricated himself and stumbled into the corridor, beating out the flames on his ragged black trousers – they looked like a hula skirt. Supported by Sonnleitner and Keitel, who had simply shaken his towering frame free of debris, Hitler limped outside.

Charred documents spiralled down from the sky. Keitel ventured, 'Mein Führer, that must have been one of the Todt workmen!'

Hitler shifted his weight onto Sonnleitner and confidently growled: 'A German workman would never lift his hand against me!'

As he limped into his bunker he added: 'I always sensed this opposition to me in the General Staff. Stalin knew what he was doing when he rubbed out Marshal Tukhachevsky. . . But now – now I shall make a clean sweep!'

While Dr. Morell was sent for, Hitler sat down unsteadily, jacketless, in shirtsleeves and braces, and took his own pulse: 72, normal. He was pleased at his self-composure.

His secretaries came in, and he grinned with smoke-blackened features at them. 'Well, ladies, things turned out well again!' He withdrew into his bedroom, walking taller than for some time.

Morell took Hitler's pulse and confirmed, '72.' Helped by his surgeon colleague Hanskarl von Hasselbach he removed the shredded trousers, revealing that the skin on the lower third of both thighs had been badly torn by the explosion; altogether they removed over a hundred splinters of the fragmented oaken trestle from his legs. His hair was singed, his face had been cut in a score of places by flying splinters, and his forehead was scarred by a falling roof timber.

'It was the work of a coward!' he exclaimed. He sent out guards to search for the hidden fuse cable and for possible additional bombs. He sent the similarly bloodstained and deafened Colonel von Below to the telephone exchange a hundred yards away to summon Göring from his bunker. The colonel removed all the jacks from the telephone switchboard and forbade the telephonists to go near them. Shortly, Hitler learned that the blast wave had evidently originated *above* floor level. Moreover, only a handful of officers had known that the war conference would be brought forward because of Mussolini's visit.

At about 1:15 P.M. he re-emerged into the sunshine, wearing a fresh uniform over bandages that covered all injuries but those to his head. To General Fellgiebel, the signals chief, whom he espied strolling deliberately up and down outside the security zone's perimeter fence, Hitler must have appeared unscathed. He had certainly fared better than his staff. Those who had been on his right had suffered the worst: Colonel Heinz Brandt had lost a foot. ('It always did hurt anyway,' he joked wanly, lying on the grass outside.) Korten had been impaled by a jagged table fragment; Schmundt had ghastly leg injuries and an eye gouged out; stenographer Berger had lost both legs. Hitler appointed him to a high civil-service grade forthwith, so that the widow could draw a pension – a provident gesture, for Berger died that afternoon.

Hitler's secretary, Christa Schroeder, later vividly recalled those hours:

> I did not expect to be called in for lunch with him after the assassination attempt. But nonetheless I was sent for to join him.
>
> I was astounded to see how fresh he looked, and how sprightly he stepped toward me. He described to me how his servants had reacted to the news: [Heinz] Linge was indignant, Arndt had begun to cry. Then he

said, verbatim, 'Believe me, this is the turning point for Germany. From now on things will look up again. I'm glad the *Schweinehunde* have unmasked themselves!'

I told him he couldn't possibly meet the Duce now. 'On the contrary!' he retorted, 'I must – what would the world press say if I did not!'

'Duce! I have just had the most enormous stroke of good fortune,' Hitler said in greeting as his Italian guest emerged from his train at 2:30 P.M.

For a while the Duce was left to his own devices. Security Zone I was packed with armoured vehicles which had crawled out of the woods, but the cause of the blast was still a mystery. It was now that Martin Bormann brought to Hitler the corporal who had tended the telephone outside the conference room. This man had seen a colonel with one arm leave in a hurry just before the explosion, without his briefcase, cap, and belt. The army officers angrily rejected the corporal's implied libel on the worthy Colonel von Stauffenberg, but suspicion against him hardened during the afternoon. The Gestapo investigators found shreds of the yellow leather briefcase embedded in the wreckage.

Stauffenberg had bluffed his way past the cordons and left at 1:13 P.M., ostensibly for Berlin's Rangsdorf airfield; but he had not arrived there.

Shortly before four o'clock his chief, General Fromm, telephoned Keitel from Berlin and said that rumours were flying around the capital and ought he declare a state of emergency?

'The Führer is alive.' Keitel rasped. 'There is no cause whatever for that. Is Stauffenberg in Berlin?' Fromm, taken aback, replied, 'No, I thought he was at Führer Headquarters.'

Almost at once the Wolf's Lair began monitoring the most extraordinary orders emanating from Fromm's office to the territorial army commands *(Wehrkreise)*, proclaiming a state of emergency by the code word 'Valkyrie.' By telephone too the commands were being instructed that Field Marshal Erwin von Witzleben, Rundstedt's predecessor, was now Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht and that he had appointed General Erich Hoepner commander of home forces.*

* The conspirators had not realised that a special network fed all orders issued to the *Wehrkreise* to the Führer's headquarters automatically as well. This slip was crucial to the crushing of the putsch.

The emergence from obscurity of these forgotten, forcibly retired, or cashiered army officers could only mean that an army putsch was being attempted in Berlin. Hitler forthwith accepted Himmler's proposal that the Gestapo be given powers to arrest army officers. Since Fromm was *prima facie* one of the conspirators, Hitler neatly legalised the move by appointing Himmler his successor, thus giving the SS leader control over all army units in the Reich; with this and Hitler's specific directive to restore order, Himmler and Kaltenbrunner took off by plane for Berlin at once. Hitler had ordered Himmler on no account to allow his Waffen SS to come into direct confrontation with the army; that would be the first step toward the ultimate tragedy of civil war.

KEITEL'S ENERGETIC countermeasures crushed the putsch in the provinces before it even began. At 4:15 P.M. his dramatic message went out to the Wehrkreise: 'Most Immediate! . . . The Führer is alive! Safe and sound! Reichsführer SS new commander of Replacement Army, only his orders valid. Do not obey orders issued by General Fromm, Field Marshal von Witzleben, or General (ret.) Hoepner! Maintain contact with local gauleiter and police commander!'

Shortly afterward, General Helmuth Stieff telephoned Keitel at Zossen. Fromm's office was proclaiming that the army had taken power; at four P.M., said Stieff, Stauffenberg and General Ludwig Beck had phoned Wagner from Berlin.* Beck was claiming to have 'taken over'; Witzleben was said to be on his way to Zossen at that moment. Toward five o'clock this was confirmed beyond doubt. A long telegram signed by Witzleben (and countersigned by Stauffenberg) was monitored, being transmitted to the Wehrkreis commands. It exploited the overwhelming loyalty of these officers to Hitler by suggesting that not they but Party malcontents were behind the putsch:

> I. Internal unrest. An unscrupulous clique of combat-shy Party leaders has exploited the situation to stab the hard-pressed armies in the back and seize power for their own selfish purposes.

* Stauffenberg had cautiously landed elsewhere than at Rangsdorf airfield, only to find neither car, driver, nor gasoline waiting there for the drive into the city; this evidently cost him ninety minutes' delay.

> II. In this hour of supreme danger the Reich government has declared martial law to preserve law and order, and appointed me Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht with absolute executive authority.

Long, detailed instructions for the incorporation of the Waffen SS, the 'elimination' of the Gestapo, and the ruthless breaking of any opposition followed. Accordingly, a warning was radioed by Hitler's HQ to Himmler's aircraft to divert to a Berlin airfield guarded by reliable SS troops.

Field Marshal Model, commanding Army Group Centre, telephoned: he had received from Bendler Strasse an order commencing 'The Führer Adolf Hitler is dead' – but he had refused to obey it.

Hitler sent for his press chief and ordered a succinct communiqué broadcast immediately to the people. It would announce: 'A bomb attack was made on the Führer today. . . Apart from minor burns and bruises the Führer was uninjured. He resumed work immediately afterward and – as planned – received the Duce for a lengthy discussion.'

Hitler subjected Mussolini to the usual impressive statistics of Speer's forthcoming production of tanks, guns, and ammunition, and secretly confided that soon there would be a new weapon, a V-2. He was resolved to 'raze London to the ground' – and 'after August, September, or October' the new secret U-boats would also enter service.

At five o'clock, tea was served in the headquarters mess. Schaub was called to the telephone. Hitler's personal adjutant, Alwin-Broder Albrecht, was on the line, calling from the Reich chancellery: strange events were afoot in Berlin. Streetcars were rattling through the government quarter without stopping and the area was being cordoned off by troops. Simultaneously, Goebbels phoned on his private line from Berlin: the commander of the Guards Battalion, Major Otto Ernst Remer, had been instructed to occupy the government quarter. 'Has the army gone mad?' the propaganda minister asked. At six o'clock the dissidents began issuing a new telegram to the Wehrkreise, this time signed by 'General Fromm.' (Fromm had not in fact signed the order.) This instructed them to 'secure' all communications stations and arrest all ministers and leading Party and police officials.

Fearing that he was losing control of events in Berlin, Hitler phoned Goebbels to find out when the radio communiqué announcing his survival would be broadcast. Goebbels replied that he was sitting on it until he had composed a fitting commentary to go with it. Hitler exploded in anger. 'I

didn't ask you for a commentary. I just want the news broadcast as fast as possible!' At 6:28 P.M. the radio service was interrupted with the startling news flash. This dealt the first body-blow to the putsch, for a *live* Hitler's word was still very much the law.

The awkward tea party with Mussolini continued until about seven o'clock. Then the doors were opened and he was ushered out into the light drizzle. 'The Duce's cloak!' ordered Hitler. Then they parted, never to meet again. Almost immediately, Goebbels was on the telephone again, this time with a highly suspicious Major Remer at his side – unable to discern whether his own army superiors or the wily propaganda minister was attempting to overthrow Hitler.

Hitler was heard shouting into the telephone, but with his ears deafened, he could hardly hear the answers; he asked to speak to Remer himself. 'Major Remer, can you hear – do you recognise my voice?' Remer could and did: once heard, Hitler's voice was unforgettable.

'Major Remer,' continued Hitler, 'they tried to kill me, but I'm alive. Major Remer, I'm speaking to you as your Supreme Commander. Only my orders are to be obeyed. You are to restore order in Berlin for me. Use whatever force you consider necessary. Shoot anybody who tries to disobey my orders.' This was the second, deadliest blow to the plot – for it enabled Hitler to use the army itself to put down the conspiracy.

Hours of suspense passed at the Wolf's Lair. The injuries began to tell on Hitler's physique. 'I am beginning to doubt that the German people is worthy of my genius,' he exclaimed – a sullen outburst that provoked a clamour of loyal protestations. Dönitz reminded him of the navy's achievements. Göring could not match this, so he picked a quarrel with Ribbentrop, who retorted, '*I* am still the foreign minister, and my name is *von* Ribbentrop!' Göring brandished his marshal's baton at him.

At eight P.M. Dr. Morell checked Hitler's pulse again: it was now 100, but strong and regular. He treated the injuries with his own 'penicillin' powder (which was in fact quite useless, if not actually toxic), and dictated these notes to his typist:

> Right forearm badly swollen, prescribed acid aluminium acetate compresses. Effusion of blood on right shinbone has subsided. On back of third or fourth finger of left hand there is a large burn blister. Dressed this. Occiput partly and hair completely singed, a palm-sized second degree burn on the middle of the calf and a number of contusions and

open flesh wounds. Left forearm has effusion of blood on interior aspect and is badly swollen, can move it only with difficulty. – Told him to take two Optalidons [an analgesic and pain-killer] and two tablespoons of Brom-Nervacit [a tranquilliser] before going to sleep.

Bormann had meanwhile purveyed what scanty information he could to the gauleiters, using his modern teleprinter link-up.* 'The reactionary criminal vermin evidently staged the attack on the Führer and his loyal officers in conjunction with the National Committee "Free Germany" in Moscow (General von Seydlitz and Count [Haubold von] Einsiedel). Should the attack succeed, the generals' clique comprising Fromm, [Friedrich] Olbricht, and Hoepner would take over power and make peace with Moscow; that this so-called peace would cost the German people their lives is obvious. That the attempt has misfired means the salvation of Germany, because now the hopes reposed in these traitorous generals have been smashed for good.' And at 9:40 P.M. Bormann warned the gauleiters: 'A General Beck wants to take over the government. The one-time Field Marshal von Witzleben is posing as the Führer's successor. Of course no National Socialist gauleiter will allow himself to be taken in by, or accept orders from, these criminals, who are just miniature worms in format.'

Dining with his secretaries that evening, Hitler voiced his anger at the assassins. 'What cowards! If they had drawn a gun on me, I might still respect them. But they didn't dare risk their own lives.' He snorted: 'The idiots cannot even imagine the chaos there would be if the reins slipped out of my grasp. I'm going to make an example of them that will make anybody else think twice about betraying the German people.' At the ten P.M. war conference, he began by expressing his regrets to the two duty stenographers over the death of their colleague Berger. He ordered a particularly violent V-1 attack on London during the night – to show that he was less inclined to compromise than ever.

The radio sound-truck from Königsberg had now arrived. Hitler's entire staff assembled in the teahouse at 11:30 P.M. – General Jodl with a white bandage around his head, Keitel with bandaged hands, others with sticking plasters; many men were missing. His voice trembling with emo-

* This was another circuit that the plotters had failed to immobilise. 'They should have gone to school with us Nazis,' Hitler scoffed to Schaub. 'Then they would have learned how to do it!'

tion, Hitler recorded a fiery speech to the nation 'So that you can hear my voice . . .'

> A minuscule clique of ambitious, unscrupulous officers of criminal stupidity, has been plotting to get rid of me and to liquidate virtually the entire German Wehrmacht command staff at the same time.
>
> The bomb was planted by Colonel Count von Stauffenberg and exploded six feet away to my right. Several of my dear colleagues were gravely injured, one has died. I myself am completely uninjured apart from a few minor scratches, bruises, and burns. I regard this as a fresh confirmation of the mission given me by Providence to continue toward my goal. . .

The speech was broadcast ninety minutes later. By that time Hitler had heard that Stauffenberg had sworn to the assembled staff officers in the army's Bendler Strasse building that he 'had seen the Führer's corpse being carried past on a stretcher.'*

The arrest-list was swelling: General Fellgiebel's very presence, uninvited, at the Wolf's Lair had compromised him; Keitel sent for him at midnight and arrested him. Hitler was mystified that this general, the army's Chief of Signals, had failed to gun him down that very afternoon. 'There he was, ambling up and down like a lamb, as though he'd had nothing to do with this conspiracy!'

In Vienna and Prague the plotters' orders had been largely carried out. In Paris the military governor had actually put the Gestapo and SS chiefs under lock and key. The position of Field Marshal von Kluge was ambiguous, for in an instant of black comedy the loyal General Hermann Reinecke, attempting to telephone General Fromm that evening, had found the doomed General Beck on the line, and Beck had imagined he had reached Kluge in France ('Kluge, is that you?'). Witzleben telephoned Keitel from his hideout during the night; the OKW chief kept him talking long enough to find out where he was, and then ordered his arrest too. A telegram from Fromm in the small hours spelled out the end of the putsch:

* 'Keitel is lying,' Stauffenberg assured Olbricht and Hoepner. He said he had seen an explosion like the impact of a 150-millimetre shell and doctors running over. 'Hardly anybody could have survived!' —This emerged from the trials and interrogations.

> Attempted putsch by irresponsible generals has been bloodily put down. All the ringleaders shot. . . I have resumed control, after having been temporarily held under armed arrest.

Undeceived, Hitler ordered General Fromm's arrest as well. At 3:40 A.M. Martin Bormann circulated the triumphant teleprinter message to the gauleiters: 'The traitors' action can be regarded as at an end.'

HITLER SAW the day's events as a temporary aberration, a kind of blood poisoning which the army would get out of its own system. The perpetrators had been 'shot by the army's own battalions,' the press announced in special editions the next day – an infelicitous choice of words which caused many ordinary Germans to ask just how large the 'minuscule clique' of traitors was? The Führer pushed the occurrence itself out of his mind, after emotionally sending the torn grey uniform jacket and black trousers to Eva Braun as a memento (they would be ceremoniously burned by the U.S. Army in 1947).

From Field Marshal Kluge's forward headquarters at La Roche-Guyon a special courier arrived with two letters. The first was from Kluge himself, the second from Rommel, written on July 15, before his injury, recommending that Hitler end the war. Rommel complained vigorously that 225 tanks had been lost, but only 17 replaced. His infantry divisions lacked artillery, armour-piercing weapons, and above all bazookas. 'Our troops are fighting heroically all along the line, but the unequal battle is nearing its end. In my view you should draw the necessary conclusions. I feel bound as the army group's Commander in Chief to say this quite bluntly.'

Kluge backed Rommel: 'Unfortunately the field marshal's view is right.'

Hitler disagreed. He would comment a few days later, that this was 'a struggle which cannot be discharged or disposed of by negotiation, by "clever" [*kluge*] politics, or by tactical sleight-of-hand.' Obviously it was a temptation for Kluge to withdraw his hard-pressed armies from Normandy to some more distant line of defence, though such a line would certainly be far longer; as Hitler told Jodl on July 31 however, 'If we lose France, we lose the basis of our U-boat campaign.' Moreover, France was Germany's last source of tungsten.

Most of the Normandy divisions were immobilised by lack of transportation; of the rest, only a few would ever reach whatever new line the generals might propose to defend. No, Kluge and his generals must stand fast where

they were until Göring had recovered at least partial air supremacy in the west.

Nonetheless, Hitler also prepared for the worst. On July 23, he ordered the West Wall fortifications which had been built in 1938 to be readied for the defence of Germany.

Two days later a new Allied offensive began in Normandy. The British thrust toward Falaise was halted by a countermove of the First SS Panzer Corps, but late on the thirtieth the Americans managed to punch a dangerous hole through the line at the coastal town of Avranches.

Hitler now instructed the OKW to prepare the Somme-Marne-Saône-Jura line for immediate occupation in the event of a collapse. Meanwhile strong garrisons commanded by officers of proven courage must be sacrificed to defend the main French ports and deprive the enemy of their use; the French railways must be destroyed down to the last freight car and sleeper. On no account was any hint of these strategic decisions to reach the army group headquarters in France, for who knew how many traitors still lurked there, waiting to pass the word to the enemy? After all, the military commander of France, General Karl-Heinrich von Stülpnagel, had made common cause with the putschists of July 20. 'Let's be quite clear on one score,' Hitler expounded to Jodl. 'The tide in France cannot turn until we manage – even just for a short time – to regain air superiority.'

Hitler had asked Göring to amass a great secret reserve of fighter aircraft, and he hoped some day to throw two thousand fighters into the struggle for France. Six new Mark XXI submarines had been delivered in July, and 144 were scheduled by the end of 1944. Germany *must* hold on to France. Hitler said that he himself would fly west to take command as he had in 1940 – but his damaged eardrums made it impossible to fly. 'Obviously,' he said on July 31, 'if all the dams burst, I would do anything and wouldn't care – I'd go as gunner in a single-engined plane to get there as fast as possible.' He reflected: 'The miracle is that the shock got rid of my nerve complaint almost entirely. My left leg still trembles somewhat if conferences go on too long, but previously this leg used to shake in bed. With this shock, that's vanished almost completely – not that I would recommend this kind of remedy.'

The assassin's bomb had affected Hitler more than he liked to admit. His right ear often began to bleed, his eyes constantly flicked to the right (nystagmus); alone in his bunker, he kept thinking he was falling over to the right. That evening he went for a short walk in the twilight and twice found him-

self wandering off the path. There was a constant taste of blood in his mouth. An army ear-nose-and-throat expert, Dr. Erwin Giesing, was fetched from Rastenburg. He cauterised the ruptured right eardrum. The ear still bled, and on July 23 Professor von Eicken came to find out why. Hitler joked: 'Perhaps I'm just a natural bleeder!' The next day he asked Giesing to cauterise the ear again, regardless of the pain. 'I stopped feeling pain long ago,' he observed. 'Besides, pain exists to make a man of you.' (Eicken had told him that perforating an eardrum was just about the most painful injury there was.) Pensively, Hitler remarked later to Sonnleitner: 'I got *both* eardrums perforated yet I didn't feel a thing – it happened so fast. That's probably how it is when you shoot yourself too. Even if you shoot yourself in the mouth rather than the brain, I now know you don't feel a thing.' Sonnleitner wondered why the Führer felt bound to pass this revelation on to him.

Visiting the hospital at nearby Rastenburg, Hitler talked with Schmundt and the others injured in the blast. Two beds were empty: Günther Korten, Chief of Air Staff, had died of his injuries on July 22; and Colonel Brandt – promoted on the deathbed to General to benefit his widow – had succumbed the same day. Korten would get a state funeral, but not Brandt: Walter Scherff, Hitler's court historian, had shared his ward and reported that the colonel had complained in his delirium at Stauffenberg's callousness in planting the bomb at his feet when he, Brandt, was one of the conspirators himself.

EACH DAY revealed more names of conspirators. Zeitzler's adjutant, Colonel Smend, contritely confessed. Virtually every section head of the army General Staff except Reinhard Gehlen and Rudolf Gercke was involved.

The implication of Colonels Hansen and Roenne, the Intelligence chiefs in the west, seemed to throw light on many otherwise inexplicable failures; so did the sudden suicide of General Eduard Wagner, the army's quartermaster-general, and the disappearance of General Lindemann, the director of artillery. Hitler became convinced that General Fellgiebel's signals organisation had instantly flashed his secrets to the enemy. 'Fellgiebel must confess,' he raged, 'if he has to be skinned alive!' Even Arthur Nebe, the Gestapo department chief had vanished without trace, as had Carl Goerdeler, twice appointed mayor of Leipzig and since then provided with an abundant pension by the Führer. Goerdeler's papers were located in a hotel safe; they revealed that he had been chosen to succeed Hitler, and they listed additional conspirators: these were arrested, and fresh chain reactions were established by their interrogation.

On July 23, Admiral Canaris was picked up by the Gestapo. Franz Halder and Hjalmar Schacht, pre-war governor of the Reichsbank, were also pulled in, as their opposition to Hitler was well documented.

Bormann began showing Hitler the lengthy interrogation reports. They did not spare the Führer's feelings. 'I could not bear to watch this man running amok,' one conspirator (General Stieff) had blurted out, 'smashing his own great works by his obstinacy: we are defending Kirkenes and Crete, but we shall be losing Königsberg and Kraków in the process!'

Over half of the traitors were army officers, but there were also trade-union officials, lawyers, and clergy. Even Count Wolf von Helldorff, the Jew baiter whom Hitler had made police president of Berlin, confessed to being one of Stauffenberg's minions. None had much clue as to what they were proposing in Hitler's place. They questioned his orders for the rigid defence of the Donets bend, the Dnieper line, the Nikopol bridgehead, the Crimea, the Narva line, the Vitebsk salient and Cherkassy pocket; but there was a class element too – he was the son of an Austrian customs official to whom the officer corps felt bound by neither blood nor brotherhood.

Gradually, the Gestapo reconstructed the assassination attempt. An English time-fuse had been used, from Abwehr stocks. A second package of explosive was found where Stauffenberg's adjutant had jettisoned it from their car as they sped back to the airfield; had they used it also, their plot might have succeeded. Stauffenberg had also carried his explosives to the Berghof on July 11 and to Rastenburg four days later, but not used them. These riddles would remain unsolved, for General Fromm had invited Beck to put a bullet in his brains, and he had rushed Stauffenberg and his adjutant in front of a firing squad before the Gestapo could get at them.

Count von Helldorff's full confession was handed to Hitler as he was being treated by the ENT-specialist Dr. Giesing. 'Who would have thought Helldorff was such a rat?' asked Hitler. 'That he was irresponsible was obvious enough from his gambling debts. How often I had to settle them for him – four or five times, and never less than one hundred thousand marks! A gambler like that was bound to fall into the hands of enemy agents, and the British secret service no doubt settled even bigger debts on his behalf. I'm sorry for his wife and pleasant children,' he added, laying the confession aside. 'But I must clean out this Augean stable with an iron broom, and there can be no mercy. . . How thankful I am to Remer. . . A few more fine, clear-thinking officers like him and I wouldn't have to worry about the future. But this yellow gang sends me an even more yellow-bellied

Stauffenberg from Berlin – if he'd at least had the courage to stay there with his briefcase! But no! It was a pity to waste even one bullet on him. I keep asking myself what they were all after. . . As though Stalin or Churchill or Roosevelt would have been bothered one instant by our sudden desire for peace! In eight days the Russians would have been in Berlin and it would have been all over for Germany – for good.' He ordered that the police chief was to watch every hanging until his own turn for the noose came.

A LETTER had come from Eva Braun, in Bavaria. It ended, 'Right after our very first meetings I promised myself I would follow you everywhere, even unto death. You know I live only for the love I can give to you.'

Hitler's escape had brought the entire German population together. It was reported that army generals in Berlin had to conceal their uniforms beneath raincoats to escape the people's indignation. 'I just heard the frightful news,' a Viennese widow wrote to Hitler. 'Did nothing happen to you, really? Mein Führer – you are all that is left to me in this world. I had a child, but he died in action in Russia at Mayevka. He had passed his examinations and had a place waiting at technical college. I had been saving up for this, but now he'll never return, my darling child! Take my money, out of joy that nothing befell the Führer.' A lock of hair and a picture of the boy accompanied the letter, which reached Hitler via the propaganda ministry.

Goebbels himself arrived at the Wolf's Lair on July 22, bent on asking for semi-dictatorial powers. Hitler regaled him with details of his miraculous escape. After the blast, he said, his first instinct had been to check that his eyes and limbs were intact. The minister was deeply moved by Hitler's appearance. 'He was just coming out of his little headquarters bunker,' he wrote in *Das Reich*, 'not weary, but relaxed; not bowed, but with his head slightly sunk – a picture to melt the sternest heart.'

A preliminary conference between Bormann, Speer, and Goebbels preceded the full session on July 23 with Hitler, Göring, and Himmler. Hitler ordered Göring to appoint the propaganda minister 'Reich Commissar for Total War Mobilisation,' and announced, despite the misgivings of his physicians, that he would speak to the gauleiters in a week's time. Speaking to Goebbels, he vented his fury at 'that Masonic lodge' – the general staff; he was going to have the traitors turned over to Judge Roland Freisler and the People's Court, not trusting army courts-martial to give them their true deserts. 'He is the greatest historic genius of our times,' Goebbels dictated to his diary on July 23. 'With him we shall see victory, or go down heroi-

cally.' His diary for July 19 to 22 is missing, perhaps never dictated – perhaps destroyed by his own hand.

Hitler now trusted nobody. Every officer who came into his presence was frisked. His food was tasted. He ordered the uniformed and bemedalled corpses of Stauffenberg and the others shot by firing squad in Berlin to be exhumed, lest the army had deceived him. Of humble and haughty alike, the heads began to roll. The Goerdeler list had suggested Count von der Schulenburg, the former ambassador in Moscow, as 'foreign minister.' Schulenburg protested his innocence, on his word of honour: Ribbentrop felt this was good enough, but his legal staff did not. The ambassador was sentenced to hang. Sonnleitner pleaded secretly with Hitler to spare him – in vain. 'My own life is unimportant,' responded Hitler evenly, 'But anybody who lifts his hand against the state in wartime must be destroyed.'

Robert Ley broadcast a speech blaming Germany's 'blue-blooded swine' for plotting their Führer's death: this brought such an aristocrat, Field Marshal von Richthofen, to the Wolf's Lair in full-dress regalia, formally protesting this slur on his breed. Hitler pointed to his adjutants *von* Below, *von* Puttkamer, and Erik *von* Amsberg, as proof that he valued men only for their accomplishments. He signed an order forbidding any intemperate criticism of the officer corps and the nobility at large; but in private he regretfully speculated that he might have done better to opt for Röhm and his revolutionary SA 'army' against the regular Reichswehr in 1934, and he declared yet again that Stalin had been right to purge his officer corps in 1937.

Treachery became the staple explanation now for his defeats. The supply of bazookas provided one example. 'Who issues these weapons?' asked Hitler angrily. Keitel shrugged. 'That was the quartermaster general, Wagner.' 'Aha!' triumphed Hitler. 'The swine! He did well to shoot himself. . . In the open countryside of the Ukraine we have bazookas in abundance. And in the hedgerows of Normandy we have none! He did it on purpose.'

Göring did what he could to restore Hitler's trust. On July 23 a staff stenographer noted: 'Before today's noon war conference, the Reichsmarschall delivered a short speech to the Führer proposing that as an outward token of gratitude for his miraculous escape the entire Wehrmacht should adopt the Hitler salute forthwith.' But each new report from Kaltenbrunner started fresh tumours festering. By the end of July 1944 two names had cropped up that Hitler had never expected to see among the plotters, Field Marshals von Kluge and Rommel. The allegation was so awesome that two weeks passed before Hitler could decide how to act on it.

He Who Rides a Tiger

August 1944 saw many of the intricate problems facing Hitler resolved, though not as he had wished. France was lost; Finland and Romania had defected; Turkey had bowed to the enemy's pressure and broken off diplomatic relations with Germany. Admiral Horthy too regarded Germany as doomed, and had begun tactical manœuvring to regain his country's lost sovereignty – once again evoking from Hitler the warning that Germany and her allies were in one boat. Or as he put it in another context – reading Kaltenbrunner's reports on the renegades of July 20 – 'He who rides a tiger will find he can't dismount.'

His health was now deteriorating badly. General Heinz Guderian thus had a freer hand than his predecessors as Chief of General Staff. This general thrived on tough decisions. Appalled at the neglect of the frontier defences he issued orders for their renovation on July 27: 'All eastern Germany must become a fortress in depth.' Local gauleiters were to work on the rapid construction of defensive positions – the Pilica line, the Narev–Bobr line, and the Vistula line from Warsaw northward to Danzig, with well-armed bridgeheads east of the most important cities along the river. Guderian signed these orders with Hitler's name; the Führer grumbled but allowed them to pass, recognising that a Russian invasion of East Prussia or the Upper Silesian industrial region would bring disaster in its train.

Hundreds of thousands of men and women began digging antitank trenches running southward from Stolp, across ripening harvest fields and farms. In Pomerania, seventy thousand women volunteered. Nothing had been done in the ancient fortress cities of Königsberg and Lötzen; Guderian soon had them bristling with minefields and captured guns. Moreover, word of Hitler's continued presence in East Prussia was spread from mouth to mouth. Thus the miracle was achieved: the Red Army was halted at Augustov

and Grodno, and Field Marshal Model's emaciated Army Group Centre, with its fewer than forty divisions, under-trained and exhausted, withstood for a while the weight of one-third of the entire Soviet forces along its four-hundred-mile front line.

In Warsaw the Polish underground army rose against the Germans as soon as the Russians showed across the river. Himmler came to Hitler. 'Mein Führer,' he orated with determined optimism, 'viewed historically, what the Poles are doing is a blessing. We'll survive the next five or six weeks. But by then Warsaw, the capital, the brains, the nerve centre of this former sixteen- or seventeen-million-strong nation of Poles, will have been wiped out – this nation that has barred our passage to the east for seven centuries and lain foul of us ever since the first Battle of Tannenberg.' The Reichsführer ordered the destruction of the city; it was to be blown up block by block.

SS General Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski fought a cruel battle against the partisans; but the Poles' commander, General Bor-Komorowski, was every inch his equal and rejected every demand to surrender, despite the dawning realisation that the Russian relief attack across the river would not come in time. 'I wish we had a multitude of men like General Bor,' exclaimed Himmler on September 21, and when the last Polish insurgents finally surrendered ten days later, he ordered that Bor be treated well.

The Red Army had reached Tukkum on the Gulf of Riga, thus cutting off Schörner's Army Group North. It was to General Eberhard Kinzel, the army group's Chief of Staff, that Stauffenberg and Beck had issued on July 20 their 'order' to retreat immediately. A catastrophe would have befallen the army group; bereft of artillery and ammunition, it would have been devoured. Now however Schörner's troops fought magnificently. 'The Bolsheviks grow more useless every day,' he complained in a private letter to Hitler. 'Prisoners on recent days range from fourteen-year-olds to old men. But what is astounding is the sheer hordes of human beings. . .'

Hitler prepared calmly for the army group's temporary isolation. Schörner shared his confidence. He ruthlessly stripped the entire command area of soldiers and packed them into the combat zone. 'I am convinced the enemy is staking everything on one card,' he wrote. 'I am convinced that . . . what matters now is to survive this phase of the battle, then we shall have won.'

Still struggling with the problem of the 'Seydlitz officers,' the personnel branch recommended that in the future the families of German traitors should be punished as a deterrent; Hitler approved the recommendation.

Farther south, Army Group South-Ukraine had been becalmed since the rout of April 1944, when it had fallen back onto Romanian soil. At that time General Schörner had blamed the OKW's General Erich Hansen – the military liaison to Marshal Antonescu. The military chaos, and above all the added financial burden on the Romanian economy, put a strain on German–Romanian relations. Hansen was nearly sixty and what Guderian described as 'a man of General Beck'; but he had Antonescu's confidence, and thus Hitler refused Schörner's repeated recommendations for a replacement. As Hitler later in August told General Alfred Gerstenberg, the Luftwaffe commander of the Romanian oil regions: 'We are staking all we've got. If we lose the oil regions, we cannot win the war.'

General Guderian had transferred six panzer and four infantry divisions away from Army Group South-Ukraine, and he had sent Schörner to Army Group North. This brought Marshal Antonescu protesting to Rastenburg on August 5. Hitler spoke to Antonescu for hours on end, assuring him that impressive new German tanks and guns were under construction; that a new explosive 'at the experimental stage' was capable of killing everybody within two miles of its point of impact; that he had failed to keep his promise about the Crimea and Ukraine only because of 'traitors' in the General Staff who had encouraged the decay of the lines of communication, and that pro-Soviet traitors had also procured the collapse of Army Group Centre.

Antonescu was unconvinced, and the discussion was sometimes heated; he assured Hitler that 'he would remain at Germany's side and be the last country to abandon the Reich.' It was a warm summer's day as they parted. Hitler trusted Antonescu's King Michael no more than he trusted any monarch. As the column of cars moved off he suddenly stepped forward and called out, 'Antonescu! Antonescu! On no account set foot inside the king's castle!' Antonescu stopped the car. Hitler repeated, 'Don't go into the king's castle!' A sudden instinct, his famous *Fingerspitzgefühl*, had warned him.

Before July 1944 was over, Himmler had provided the army with forty new reserve battalions. The new divisions were now called *Volksgrenadier* divisions, for Himmler had obtained Hitler's approval to raise a People's Army, designed to attract German youth and untainted by the spirit of the older generation. Whereas General Fromm had grudgingly furnished Hitler with 60,000 new soldiers a month, by mid-August Himmler had raised 450,000 new troops, and 250,000 more recruits were already in the barracks.

When Bormann assembled the gauleiters at Posen on August 3, Himmler boasted of his prowess as the new de facto Commander in Chief of the army. But he could not explain how the rambling, ill-concealed Stauffenberg network had escaped his scrutiny.

Speer then spoke of how future arms production would restore Germany's freedom of action and air supremacy by December.

Thus prepped and encouraged, the gauleiters came to hear Hitler speak on August 4. He was still unwell. One diarist wrote: 'The Führer walked in very slowly and stiffly, and proffered only his left hand; but later, when he began his speech, he loosened up and became more lively.'

He disclosed that he had set up an Army Court of Honour under Rundstedt to discharge the conspirators from the Wehrmacht so that they could be tried by the People's Court; those found guilty would be hanged.

Helmut Sündermann, the deputy press chief, wrote:

> The speech's beginning was delayed a bit as the Führer ordered the prepared desk to be removed; he had a small table and chair brought, sat down, and began to speak so softly at first that I had difficulty hearing from the back row. Then his voice rapidly rose.
>
> 'I always knew that shots would be fired at me one day from this quarter; but I never dreamed the blow would be struck so far below the belt!' He said he was now 'old and shaky,' not because of his fight against Germany's enemies but because of the perpetual conflict with 'this clique which always eluded me.' This numerically small but highly influential group would have been totally incapable of any real political achievements, as they were wholly out of touch with the broad public. . . Now we were in the position of somebody who had been poisoned – if we could surmount this crisis then we would not be dead, but in superb health. Although he had spoken virtually nothing of substance, his speech had an obvious impact on the gauleiters.
>
> As the senior man present, [Konstantin] Hierl [leader of the Reich Labour Service] spoke a few words of thanks to the Führer: 'There is only one kind of loyalty. There is no "loyal, more loyal, loyalest." There is only "loyal," and that says everything.'

The Führer's insomnia had returned. Though he might scoff at Stauffenberg's 'bungling,' the injuries remained very painful. Morell's treatment of his right elbow had resulted in dermatitis and pruritis which left it

so swollen that he could not sign documents; when unsuspecting front-line generals heartily grasped his right hand he winced at the pain. Morell was also injecting massive doses of Ultraseptyl, a sulphonamide-type drug of high toxicity (manufactured by one of his companies), and an oxygen bottle now stood hissing in one corner of Hitler's bunker room.

'At two A.M. sent for by Patient A [Hitler],' Morell had recorded on July 24, 1944: 'He complained about the burns on his arm, the thick alcohol-soaked dressing [applied by Dr. von Hasselbach], inflammation, and swellings.' Three days later: 'Ear still bleeding at times. Führer talked about letting some blood, but his blood pressure was normal.' And on July 29: 'Note that since the moment the bomb blast occurred the tremor has vanished from his leg and the trembling of his hands is down to a minimum.'

As Hitler complained of a throbbing pain over his right eye on August 2, Morell drained off 200 c.c. of his patient's blood to lower the pressure.

THAT DAY, August 2, Hitler discussed with Dr. Goebbels an unsettling predicament which had confronted him for several days.

One of the putschists, Lieutenant-Colonel Caesar von Hofacker, had deliberately implicated both Kluge and Rommel in the July 20 plot. Both of these field marshals enjoyed immense popularity – it would be unthinkable to stand them before the People's Court. Hitler had sent for General Jodl on August 1, showed him the Hofacker interrogation report, and indicated that as soon as Rommel recovered, he would personally question him and then retire him from the army without fuss. As he said a few weeks later, 'He has done the worst possible thing a soldier can do under such circumstances – sought for some way out other than the purely military.' It was now hardly surprising that twenty-two of the army generals of Army Group Centre had deserted to Soviet captivity in the last fourteen days. Hitler and Goebbels agreed that it would be counter-productive to hold up the generals to public abuse now, in mid-battle; but the propaganda minister was ordered to withhold no details of their accomplices' treachery.

The enemy had now landed a million and a half troops in the Normandy beachhead. The attempted British breakthrough from Caumont had been checked, but American armour and troops were pouring through the breach at Avranches on the coast into Brittany. There was one obvious countermove: 'We must strike like lightning,' Hitler announced at a war conference. 'When we reach the sea the American spearheads will be cut off. Obviously they are trying all-out for a major decision here, because otherwise they

wouldn't have sent in their best general, Patton. The more troops they squeeze through the gap, and the better they are, the better for us when we reach the sea and cut them off! We might even be able to eliminate their whole beachhead. We mustn't get bogged down with mopping up the Americans that have broken through; their turn will come later. We must wheel north like lightning and turn the entire enemy front from the rear.'

Hitler issued the order for the attack late on August 2. It was to be spearheaded by General von Funck's Forty-seventh Panzer Corps. Hitler planned to employ eight of his nine panzer divisions in Normandy, and a thousand fighter planes. He sent General Warlimont to Kluge's headquarters; the generals there assured Warlimont that the attack might well succeed. During the sixth, Hitler drafted a message to Funck's troops:

> The outcome of the Battle for France depends on the success of the attack on the southern wing of the Seventh Army. Commander in Chief West [Kluge] will have a unique and unrepeatable opportunity of thrusting into a region largely devoid of the enemy, and of thereby changing the whole situation.

While the spearheads were thrust boldly through to the sea, fresh panzer divisions were to follow in their wake and wheel north, where they would turn the enemy front in Normandy. Once again however – fatefully for Hitler – the British code-breakers had deciphered all of the OKW's signals preparing this decisive battle.

In a series of telephone conversations General Jodl learned that Kluge was planning to start the attack before midnight, without waiting for the fighter squadrons to arrive. In addition, only four of the planned eight panzer divisions could be extricated from the battlefield in the north in time. Kluge explained that the enemy had already detected their preparations, and he was prepared to take the responsibility for jumping off now. Hitler mistrusted Kluge's judgement. Above all, he wanted Kluge to wait for the right weather. He sent his best infantry general, Walter Buhle, to France, but it was too late: the half-cocked thrust had already begun by the time Buhle arrived. The first big town, Mortain, was recaptured by an SS panzer division, but then the fog lifted and a murderous enemy air assault began. Kluge's grenadiers unflinchingly faced slaughter, but the tanks themselves could proceed no farther. At eleven that evening Kluge informed Jodl that he had failed. Hitler passed judgement on Kluge with one rasping sentence –

as ominous as the judgement that the People's Court passed that same day on Witzleben and his fellow conspirators: 'The attack failed because Kluge *wanted* it to fail.'

At Hitler's headquarters the disaster in Normandy was openly blamed on the Luftwaffe. Hitler had not seen Göring since July 23; Göring still had to introduce to Hitler a successor to the fatally injured Chief of Staff. The Reichsmarschall recognised that his own star was waning. After the putsch attempt, Admiral Dönitz had preceded him in a broadcast to the nation, and he was no match for the new Himmler–Bormann–Goebbels triumvirate; he had therefore retired to bed. Meanwhile, until he 'recovered,' General Karl Koller had to bear the brunt of Hitler's intemperate attacks. 'At every conference the Führer rants on for hours on end about the Luftwaffe,' lamented Koller in his diary on August 8. 'He strongly reproaches the Luftwaffe. The reasons are our lack of aircraft, technological shortcomings, and non-completion of the replacement squadrons in the Reich, the Me-262, etc.'

Six squadrons, each of sixty-eight fighters, had been transferred to the Reich for rehabilitation in July; now that Hitler ordered Kluge to prepare a second attack on Avranches, a tug-of-war began over these squadrons. He instructed Jodl late on the eighth to transfer four squadrons to the west.

The next day Hitler increased his demand to six squadrons and ordered Kluge to be ready to attack Avranches again on the eleventh. 'The Forty-seventh Panzer Corps attack failed because it was launched prematurely and was thus too weak, and under weather conditions favouring the enemy. It is to be repeated elsewhere with powerful forces.' Kluge was to employ six panzer divisions in a more south-westerly direction than on the seventh; and General Hans Eberbach was to be in command instead of Funck (who had been on Fritsch's staff before the war and therefore could not be trusted).

General Werner Kreipe was finally introduced to Hitler on August 11 as acting chief of air staff. He wrote in his shorthand diary: 'The Führer has become very bent, with cotton wool in his ears, and he frequently trembles uncontrollably; one must not shake his hand too violently. . . First the Führer asked me about my career, then spoke at length on the origins of what he called the collapse and failure of the Luftwaffe – primarily the errors of the Reichsmarschall's technical advisers, who had made over-hasty promises about the quality and quantity of new aircraft types. The air staff had probably also been deceived, and – through negligence or ignorance – made

false statements to him on which he [Hitler] had unhappily based his decision. He mentioned Milch, Udet, and Jeschonnek in this context.'

Kreipe swore to speak only the unadulterated truth to him.

In France meanwhile the Goddess of Fortune had eluded Hitler's grasp, and she would not return. The British were still deciphering all the German orders. Suffice to say that events now overtook General Eberbach. On the twelfth, the Allies captured Alençon in his rear; by late on the thirteenth the jaws closing on him – the British and Canadians from Falaise in the north, and the Americans from Argentan – were barely twenty miles apart. Desperate fighting ensued in the Falaise pocket. Hans Pfeiffer, Hitler's one-time adjutant, died in a blazing tank in Normandy. Hans Junge, the young SS captain who had been his orderly, was struck down by a strafing Spitfire; his wife Traudl was Hitler's youngest secretary – he kept the gloomy secret to himself until it was confirmed some days later, then broke it to her in person. 'Ach, child, I am so sorry; your husband had a fine character.' Bormann's letters testify to Hitler's dejection over this one episode.

Field Marshal Kluge's tactics in Normandy, meanwhile, defied explanation. Despite Hitler's clear orders, he was still holding Eberbach's tank forces too far to the north. On August 14 Hitler again ordered Eberbach to attack the American Fifteenth Corps at Alençon. Patton's tanks were roaming freely across Brittany. It looked like the end in France. A Luftwaffe general attending Hitler's midday conference recorded: 'Tense atmosphere. Fegelein [Himmler's liaison officer] dropped hints that even more generals and field marshals are involved in July 20.' That afternoon Heinrich Himmler, conferring alone with Hitler, offered firm proof that Kluge and Rommel had been in the anti-Hitler conspiracy. Late that evening, news reached Hitler's conference that the invasion of the French Riviera was under way.

Thus August 15, 1944, arrived. 'The worst day of my life,' Hitler subsequently admitted. At the morning conference the news was that the Americans had started their big attack on the Falaise pocket, and that Field Marshal von Kluge had disappeared. He had ostensibly set out to confer with Eberbach on whether to abandon the panzer attack on Alençon. But he had not arrived, and an *enemy* radio signal was monitored asking where he was! Towering clouds of suspicion suddenly blotted Hitler's horizon. As evening came, Hitler learned that Kluge's radio truck had been silent since last signalling at 9:30 A.M., and neither Eberbach, nor SS General Hausser, nor SS General Sepp Dietrich had seen him. Either he was dead, gunned

down by a strafing aircraft – or he was at that very moment secretly negotiating the surrender of the entire western front to the enemy. 'To change our destiny by surrendering to the British and joining forces against Russia – what an idiotic notion!' Hitler scoffed a few days later.

At 7:30 P.M. he ordered SS General Hausser to take over Army Group B and stop the enemy onrush threatening to envelop the Fifth Panzer Army. Kluge was still missing. Hitler spent a sleepless night, swallowed fresh sedatives to no avail at six A.M., and asked for a doctor again at eleven.

He learned now that Eberbach's HQ had reported Kluge's arrival that night in the heart of the Falaise pocket; there was no explanation of where he had been all day. Hitler could trust him no longer, and he radioed: 'Field Marshal von Kluge is to leave the danger area immediately for Fifth Panzer Army HQ, from which he is to direct the withdrawal movement.'

Field Marshal Model, to whom Hitler had only the day before pinned the Diamonds award, and who was already back at the eastern front, was recalled to the Wolf's Lair and secretly appointed Kluge's successor. He was sent by plane to Kluge with a sealed letter ordering him home. Model arrived unannounced at Kluge's headquarters late on the seventeenth and immediately issued orders which resulted three days later in the almost unhoped-for escape of the main forces from the Falaise encirclement.

KLUGE RETURNED to his native village – but in a coffin, having been killed on the nineteenth by a cerebral haemorrhage, according to the army doctors. A second army autopsy conducted on Hitler's orders reached the same verdict. According to his Chief of Staff, General Günther Blumentritt, Kluge had been shocked by the failure of his attack on Avranches on August 7. He had sent his son into the Falaise pocket with the words 'Let nobody accuse me of sparing my son and heir.' Blumentritt had last seen him on the eighteenth, tapping a battle chart and moaning, 'Avranches, Avranches! This town has cost me my reputation as a soldier. I'll go down in history as the Benedeck of the western front.* I did my best, but that's fate for you.'

It seemed that an aged field marshal had faded away, his heart worn out by the burden of being both Commander in Chief West and Commander of Army Group B. Hitler mistrustfully ordered SS doctors to stage yet a third autopsy; meanwhile Kluge's death was to remain a state secret.

* Ludwig von Benedeck commanded the Austrian army defeated at the Battle of Königgrätz by General Helmuth von Moltke during the Austro-Prussian War (1866).

Now Hitler saw the strange British repatriation of Panzer General Hans Cramer, just before 'Overlord,' in a more sinister light. The British must have sent him to establish contact with the plotters! Was this how they had contacted Kluge? The Gestapo had already arrested Cramer in another context after July 20. 'The British have announced,' mused Hitler, thinking out loud, at the end of August, 'that they were in contact with a German general. The officer who was probably the go-between has effectively been arrested . . . for other reasons already. That was the man who was to set up this thing, in these people's view – of capitulating if possible to the British and then marching *with* the British against Russia, a totally idiotic concept.' In mid-August the army had dropped its proceedings against the general for lack of evidence. Hitler, dissatisfied, ordered two more investigations. Nothing conclusive was proven about Cramer's strange mission; but British records do show that their Intelligence attached unusual importance to asking each new batch of prisoners for word about General Cramer and his fate.

AMERICAN FORCES had reached the Seine on August 18 and were only thirty-six miles from Paris. The German army was in full flight across the river, abandoning its heavy gear in a panic-stricken scramble for the German frontier. The Luftwaffe's General Koller returned from Paris with grim reports on the moral decay of the army after four years of occupation. Hitler had foreseen all this; now his generals had their 'war of movement' with a vengeance. On the nineteenth he called in Keitel, Speer, and Jodl and soberly ordered them to lay the material foundations for a new western army, as he was planning a great counteroffensive in November, when the enemy air forces would be grounded by bad weather. Twenty-five divisions must be raised and equipped for this. (Thus was born the Ardennes offensive.)

Martin Bormann steered most of the odium for the defeat onto the Luftwaffe. Hitler asked caustically how long the Reichsmarschall's indisposition might be expected to last; but it was not until August 26 that Göring reappeared at the Wolf's Lair. Meanwhile Bormann initiated a 'Luftwaffe Scandals' dossier to which his gauleiters contributed profusely: bombs had been shunted out of bombproof stores to make room for contraband from Italy and Greece; at Rechlin, the main experimental airfield, a technician tipped off Bormann that a villa was being built for the commandant at Lake Ammersee at Luftwaffe expense and that Luftwaffe workmen were flying down to Bavaria each weekend to finish the job; Göring's sacked deputy,

Milch, was accused of having fostered bad aircraft and aero-engine projects for the sake of old Lufthansa business cronies. Small wonder that Hitler compared Göring unfavourably with Himmler and remarked on how the latter had conjured up new battalions for the army; General Kreipe could not even find out how many men there were in the Luftwaffe.

Hitler began to think of dissolving the entire Luftwaffe. On August 17 he telephoned Kreipe and instructed him to replace Field Marshal Sperrle, the fat Luftwaffe commander in France, by General Dessloch; it was typical of Hitler to have delayed this decision until now, when it was too late. The first Me-262 jet bomber squadron was still to enter service; Göring, Kreipe, Speer, and Galland all wanted the Me-262 used as a fighter. The bombproof oil refineries would not begin operating until March 1945, but by December the OKW fuel reserve would have been consumed.

ON AUGUST 20, 1944, the Red Army launched its main offensive of the late summer on General Friessner's army group on the Romanian frontier. Within three days the new Sixth Army would be all but encircled here; but Hitler's eyes were still on France.

In Paris, armed partisan bands had risen against the German garrison. The city was vital both militarily and politically, and Hitler had issued an emphatic demand for its defence on the twentieth. Every Seine bridge between Paris and the sea had already been destroyed; Hitler ordered those intact in Paris heavily defended by anti-aircraft guns, because if they fell into enemy hands – and Choltitz had not even mined them yet – then the enemy could prise open Hitler's coastal defences from the rear and rob him of his V-1 launching sites as well. 'In all history the loss of Paris has meant the loss of France,' Hitler reminded Model in an order on August 22. 'Inside the city the first signs of revolt are to be harshly put down, *e.g.*, by blowing up entire street blocks, by public execution of the ringleaders, or by evacuation of any districts involved, as only this will stop things getting out of hand. The Seine bridges are to be prepared for demolition. Paris must not fall into enemy hands – or if it does, then only as a field of ruins.'

IN THE Balkans, things were as usual in a state of flux. When Hitler's two south-eastern commanders, Weichs and Löhr, came for a conference on August 22, Weichs brought news of a remarkable rapprochement between General Nedić, the puppet prime minister of Serbia, and Draža Mihailović, leader of the Četnik guerrillas, who proposed to unite in the face of the

threat to the Serbs posed by Tito's Communist partisans; together they had offered to help Hitler in the Balkans if he would provide the necessary ammunition – three million rounds – and allow them to raise an army of fifty thousand men from the Četniks. Field Marshal Weichs proposed a modified acceptance of their terms.

All Hitler's latent Austrian resentment against the Serbs welled up within him. 'The Serbs are the only eternally consistent people in the Balkans,' Jodl's diary quoted him as warning. 'They alone have the strength and the ability to keep pursuing their pan-Serbian aims.' Hitler's experiences in arming helpful friends had chastened him. He would therefore permit the new experiment proposed by Weichs but on only the smallest scale.

All Germany's erstwhile allies were decamping. On August 17 Keitel had decorated Marshal Mannerheim with a high German award; but Mannerheim had pointedly responded that the Finnish people had made him president in place of Ryti because they objected to the latter's pro-German policies. At the other end of the Russian front, Marshal Rodion Malinovski's armies were pouring into Romania. Hitler trusted Marshal Antonescu, but not the Romanian army; indeed, only recently he had secretly authorised General Friessner to withdraw Army Group South-Ukraine to the obvious best line – from Galatz on the Danube to the Carpathians – the instant the Russians attacked. On August 22 he ordered experts to find out if a seventy-foot-wide canal could be excavated immediately – using hordes of slave labourers – from the Danube to the Black Sea at Constanta. Rumours multiplied, for instance from the air attaché in Hungary, that a coup was imminent; his envoys in Bucharest reassured Hitler that all was well.

It was not, however. He was having tea late on August 23 when his Wehrmacht adjutant, Amsberg, called him to the phone: Sonnleitner, Hewel's successor, had received a call from their man in Bucharest, Baron von Killinger, saying that strange things were going on there – that Marshal Antonescu had been summoned to the royal palace and had not returned. Hitler commented to Amsberg: 'Why on earth didn't he listen to me!'

Shortly afterward, Romanian radio broadcast a proclamation by King Michael: 'The Romanian government has accepted the armistice offered by Russia and the United Nations.' He had ordered his forces not to open hostilities with the Germans, but this was cold comfort for Hitler: most of his current oil requirements were met from the Romanian wells.

For a while Hitler contemplated desperate solutions. Sonnleitner has described, in an unpublished manuscript, how Hitler swept into the packed

situation conference that evening wearing his black cloak – what the old Austrian army called a *pelerine* – his face pale, his eyes searching every face around the table. General Kreipe wrote in his diary that evening: 'Telephone conversation with Ambassador von Killinger and Gerstenberg [air attaché] in Bucharest. Both trapped in their legation. Killinger a complete wreck, sends greetings to the Führer. Gerstenberg suggests dive-bomber attack and using the [Fifth] Flak Division at Ploesti to seize the city! I phone Hitler several times, he approves Gerstenberg's proposals, demands the arrest of the king. Contact established with Bucharest once more, then interrupted.'

The mood lifted, recalled Sonnleitner, as though the situation had already been restored. As he accompanied the Führer back to his bunker, the latter blurted out: 'If you only knew what it takes! When you go in and know that something awful has happened, because you can see it written on every chalk-white face, and then you've not only got to pull yourself together to find ways and means of redressing the situation – because that's not enough – you've got to muster enough eagerness and energy to coax the others round so they go along with you and perhaps even do their bit to halt the catastrophe!'

Sonnleitner, a fellow Austrian, could see a creeping exhaustion taking hold of Hitler. From 9:45 P.M. until far into the night the Führer's headquarters radioed orders into Romania. General Friessner was to seize the oilfields and plan ways of getting the oil to the Reich. Every German serviceman in Romania was placed at his disposal; General Hansen was to put down the putsch; the Fifth Flak Division at Ploesti was to occupy the capital as Gerstenberg had suggested, and Admiral Brinkmann was to seize the Black Sea port of Constanta. A pro-Nazi Romanian general was to be appointed head of the government.

Hitler began his delayed evening war conference at two A.M. and afterward again discussed the altered Balkan situation with Field Marshal von Weichs. He had decided to abandon Greece the moment the enemy attacked. He would shift his *Schwerpunkt* to northern Greece. This made it vital to prevent the Bulgarians – whose defection was clearly only hours away – from seizing the railway line from Nis to Skopje for the Allies, as this was the only link with Greece.

At 3:30 A.M. Gerstenberg radioed from Ploesti to Hitler's headquarters: 'Fought my way out and took command in Ploesti together with SS General [Horst] Hoffmeyer.' But both Hansen and Killinger had already given up hope. Their telephone message reached East Prussia an hour later:

'This is no putsch by some court camarilla, but a well-laid coup d'état from above with the complete backing of the army and people.' Not one Romanian general sympathetic to Nazi Germany could now be found. The Romanians controlled the means of communication. 'Given the balance of forces, there is at present no prospect of a military or political success.'

Nevertheless, by midday the two thousand anti-aircraft troops were at the city's northern outskirts. Gerstenberg emphatically disowned Hansen's gloomy assessment and called down three bombing attacks on the city centre. But he was outnumbered 4 to 1; the Romanians had mined the approach roads and they were bringing up tanks and artillery. Gerstenberg captured the radio station, but without proper combat troops he could proceed no farther. Hitler ordered more troops in. 'War conference with the Führer,' a Luftwaffe general wrote at midday. 'Everyone busy with Romania. Hitler very optimistic, curses SS intelligence service and foreign ministry, mimics Ribbentrop. – Goebbels and Bormann also present.'

Using the bombing attacks as an excuse, the Romanians declared war on Germany on the twenty-fifth. Hitler transferred General Stahel, the Luftwaffe trouble-shooter general who had had served him well in Sicily, and more recently in Vilna and Warsaw, to take command in Bucharest. But within four days of his arriving in Romania Stahel and Gerstenberg were the captives of the Red Army now debouching into the country. Baron Manfred von Killinger committed suicide as his legation was stormed.

With the now hostile Romanians in the rear, Friessner's army group collapsed; sixteen German divisions were wiped out in the débâcle. Finland and Bulgaria trembled; from Hungary too came sounds of an imminent earthquake that needed no seismograph for Hitler to detect.

To his war staff Hitler still radiated confidence and dynamism. Johannes Göhler, a young SS captain who now joined the conferences with the Führer as Fegelein's adjutant, jotted down his first impressions on August 27, 1944:

> I am filled with the most ineffable admiration of him; he is unique as a man, as a politician, as a military commander. He radiates such a comforting calmness. But more than once I have heard him speak harshly – and each occasion was when on purpose or sometimes out of ignorance less than the full and brutal truth had been spoken, or even an outright lie. He seems to sense it at once; it is enormously impressive for me. . . What astounds me again and again is the radiance emanating from the

> Führer: I have seen the highest ranking officers come to report laden with problems and worries. They always leave his presence full of new confidence and hope.

In Berlin, the trials of the traitors continued. Revolted by the newsreel film of the People's Court hearing against Field Marshal Witzleben and the other putschists, Hitler sent a sharp rebuke to Roland Freisler criticising his behaviour as the judge. 'He is behaving like a ham actor, instead of getting the trial of these common criminals over as quickly as possible,' he told Schaub. The hangings were also filmed, but Hitler refused to see the films; when Fegelein produced photographs of the naked corpses, Hitler irritably tossed the pictures aside. Wholly in character, Hitler ordered Himmler, at the end of August, to provide monthly subsistence payments to the next-of-kin of the hanged men 'to spare them the worst hardships as in the case of the next-of-kin left by those shot after [the Röhm purge of] June 30, 1934.'

General von Choltitz's feeble surrender of Paris on August 25, 1944, made it impossible to establish a Somme–Marne position in time.

Shameful word still reached Hitler of the scenes of rout and degradation in France. In one area, officers forced their cars past bridge bottlenecks at pistol point; Luftwaffe trucks laden with furniture and loot mingled with fleeing troops, while enemy aircraft leisurely raked the columns from a hundred feet up with cannon and machine-gun fire.

Warsaw, Paris, and now Bucharest had seen disgraceful scenes. Hitler issued an angry order to his viceroys to prevent any recurrence, by evacuating their staffs immediately – right now – from the biggest non-German cities:

> Our military and civilian authorities are often living irresponsibly and opulently without the slightest warlike preparations, sometimes even surrounded by their families and female employees. Defeats at the front coupled with uprisings in the cities result in their being paralysed the moment a crisis breaks out. The upshot is that our troops are witness to a panic-stricken headlong flight, encumbered by a disgraceful load of German and alien womenfolk and their own or other people's ill-gotten goods, streaming across the countryside.
>
> Nothing is more likely to tarnish the image of these German authorities and thus of the Reich in the eyes of our troops and foreign populations.

The loss of France gnawed at Hitler. As they left one conference Sonnleitner heard an SS general tackle him: 'Mein Führer, I just don't understand. I was at Avranches with my own division and an army division: we had no enemy ahead, we could *smell* the sea – but we weren't allowed to attack! I said our attack was bound to succeed, but Field Marshal Kluge told us headquarters had forbidden it. We could have avoided this whole stinking mess if we had been allowed to press on!' Hitler threw a meaningful glance at Sonnleitner: 'See? – It was treachery, pure and simple!'

Kluge of course was in no position to defend his reputation: his mortal remains were still at his village church awaiting burial. On August 28, General Burgdorf, chief of army personnel, showed Hitler the long-awaited report on the third autopsy, by SS doctors. Bormann noted triumphantly:

> On the evening of August 28 SS General Fegelein disclosed to me that analysis by the RSHA [Reich Main Security Office] has established that Field Marshal Kluge poisoned himself with cyanide! And that Kluge wrote the Führer a farewell letter. . . Kluge wrote that as a soldier he has drawn the consequences of his defeat, which he had predicted and dreaded all along. In Kluge's view Germany's defeat is inevitable; hence the Führer should realise this and act accordingly.

The letter was a strange amalgam of fanaticism, asseverations of loyalty, and defeatism. The next day the testimony of his nephew proved Kluge's links with the plotters; Judge Freisler adjourned the trial to send for Kluge, not realising that he was dead. Hitler ordered a quiet funeral, with military pallbearers but no other honours: obviously Kluge *had* tried to contact the enemy, only to see a fighter-bomber destroy his radio truck. 'It was the purest chance that his plan was not carried out,' Hitler marvelled on August 31. 'The army group's entire actions are explicable only in this light.'*

Kluge, at 62, had given up the fight; Hitler, at 55, would fight on. 'We shall fight on, if need be on the Rhine. Where, matters not the least to me. Come what may we will keep fighting this fight until – as Frederick the Great once said – one of our accursed enemies tires of the struggle. . .'

* The CIC interrogated Kluge's son-in-law, Dr. Udo Esch of the army medical corps, on July 27, 1945. It was he who had supplied Kluge with the cyanide. Kluge, said Esch, had discussed with him the possibility of surrendering the entire western front. 'He went to the front lines but was unable to get in touch with the Allied commanders.'

Rommel Gets a Choice

'I HAVE ALWAYS SAID,' remarked Hitler as autumn 1944 approached, 'the time is not ripe for a *political* decision. . . I need hardly add that I won't let a suitable opportunity pass. But obviously it is infantile and naïve to look for a favourable political initiative at a moment of grave military defeats.' The outburst was directed as much against Foreign Minister Ribbentrop as against Field Marshal Kluge. The day before, August 30, Ribbentrop had submitted a memorandum asking for authority to put out peace feelers. But Hitler was waiting for the moment when the differences between east and west finally brought the Russians into open conflict with their allies. He hinted to a French diplomat on September 1 that this was one hidden blessing of the German retreats: when the Bolsheviks filled the vacuum, their true brutal nature was not concealed for long.

Was this perhaps the secret reason for Hitler's new readiness to evacuate his troops from the Balkans – to provide bait for his enemies to squabble over? On September 2, Field Marshal von Weichs cabled that British officers had asked for a meeting in which to co-ordinate Germany's withdrawal from Greece with the British advance, so as to leave no such momentary vacuum for Communists to fill. Weichs reminded Jodl that the Führer had disclosed his intention of abandoning southern Greece: captured documents clearly betrayed the Communists' intentions of seizing the key posts there before the British could take over. But Hitler – his eye now on more distant aims – refused.

As the German withdrawal from southern Greece began, the British took no action to disrupt it – another sign, in Hitler's view, that Stalin had laid claim to the entire Balkans. 'It is politically desirable to foment trouble between Communists and nationalists in every region we abandon,' quoted Jodl in his diary.

Besides, Hitler had another card up his sleeve. By way of Japan, loud and unmistakable hints reached Hitler late in August that Stalin was reluctant to destroy Germany, as Russia would need all Germany's industrial expertise in the coming conflict with the West. 'Stalin is evidently willing to conclude a peace treaty even with a National Socialist Germany under Adolf Hitler,' the telegram from Tokyo read. This was why the Soviet offensive had stopped short of Russia's 1940 frontiers, and this was why Stalin had not emulated his western allies' terror-bombing of German cities.

General Guderian agreed with Hitler that Germany still held some trump cards. If Germany could survive the next months her military and political position could only get better.

NOT SHARING Hitler's strategic motivation, Finland would shortly follow Romania's distressing example. On August 21 a German counteroffensive by the Third Panzer Army had restored contact with Schörner's isolated Army Group North, and he came to see Hitler six days later to plead for permission to abandon Estonia. On this occasion Hitler's silence alone persuaded Schörner to withdraw his request. But a few days later Hitler learned that Finland had begun armistice talks in Moscow. On September 2, General Kreipe wrote in his diary: 'At war conference [Führer] swears about Mannerheim, takes immediate decisions.' Himmler warned Hitler the same day of secret reports that Hungary was also planning to defect; on the eighth the Bulgarian government formally declared war on the Reich.

All these diminutions of Hitler's empire produced one certainty: that within months his arms factories would no longer have the oil or raw materials they needed. In August he had instructed Albert Speer to analyse just how long the war could be prosecuted, given a 'minimum economic region.' These instructions anticipated the German evacuation of Finland and Norway, and all of southern Europe as far as the Alps in Italy, the Sava River in Yugoslavia and the Tisza River in Hungary.

Already the Reich had lost Ukrainian manganese, Turkish chrome, Portuguese and Spanish tungsten, Romanian petroleum, Balkan ores, southern France's bauxite, and probably the Finnish nickel of Petsamo. How long Sweden would supply iron ore was uncertain. On September 3 Speer assured Dönitz he already had enough iron ore for the whole of 1945. But later, his experts' final verdict on Hitler's 'minimum economic region' came to a very different conclusion: 'If the present production of special steels is continued, chrome supplies will be exhausted by January 1, 1945.'

Assuming this bottleneck could somehow be surmounted, steel output would end by August 31, 1945.

'Hitler suddenly began talking of the war,' a doctor treating him at this time recalled. 'He said the British and American gentlemen had made a huge miscalculation. He still had all the raw materials he needed to last one year; we even had enough gasoline stockpiled for eleven months.'

Even so, 'one year' put a very clear deadline on any breach between east and west – if such a breach was to avail Hitler's Germany.

The clinical after-effects of July 20 still lingered on. His arm was far from healed. Worse, he had caught a head cold from his barber – for he still couldn't shave himself – and fierce sinus headaches had begun to keep him awake all night. On August 18, Professor von Eicken had examined him and recommended a different sulphonamide drug to Ultraseptyl.

Morell sharply rebuked him: 'Out of the question – the Führer is allergic to anything else.'

To ease the sinus pains, Erwin Giesing began a mild course of cocaine treatment: Hitler sensed an immediate relief, though the cocaine reaction often brought him out in a sweat; on one occasion he felt giddy, things went black in front of his eyes, and for a full ninety seconds he had to lean heavily on the table in order not to fall over. Perhaps inevitably, over the next weeks the Führer began begging the army doctor to prolong the cocaine treatments. He teased the doctor, 'I hope you are not making an addict out of me.' He began to take a morbid interest in his own body; he borrowed medical lexicons from Giesing, and experimented on his orderlies with Giesing's mirrors and instruments after the doctor had gone. His famed memory was however fading; he now easily forgot names and faces too. 'But what does my health matter, when the entire nation's existence is at stake?' he would hoarsely ask the doctor.

The attempt on his life had left him increasingly irritable and snarling. Emerging from his bunker to walk to the conference hut, he found his six-foot SS adjutant, Richard Schulze, dutifully waiting to escort him.

'Herrgott!' Hitler burst out. 'Can't I ever make it alone!'

Everybody was suspect, new or old: Gestapo agents were also following every movement of Rommel now that he had risen from his sickbed.

In the west, Hitler had reappointed Field Marshal von Rundstedt as Supreme Commander; his loyalty at least was beyond reproach. Model had

tactical command, as commander of Army Group B. On September 3, Brussels fell, and the next day the Allies captured the port of Antwerp; almost no effort had been made to destroy the port installations. Model reported that the Allies had two thousand five hundred tanks; the entire German tank strength in the west was less than one hundred. Without air cover he was helpless.

The V-1 flying-bomb organisation in northern France had been overrun, but on September 3 Hitler ordered airborne launchings from Heinkel bomber-aircraft to continue. Production had just reached 3,419 a month. The damage inflicted on London had been enormous – in one suburb during August over 20,000 houses a day had been severely damaged by flying-bomb explosions. The British government now conceded that 450 aircraft with 2,800 flying personnel had already been lost in the fight against this weapon. Now Hitler opened fire with the V-2 – the army's fourteen-ton A-4 rocket – from mobile launching sites in Holland.

To ensure that all went well he appointed SS General Hans Kammler to direct the V-weapon attack. On September 8 the first missiles slammed without warning into Central London. Hitler triumphantly ordered Himmler to decorate Wernher von Braun, and he instructed Speer to step up V-2 output to nine hundred a month.

Hitler's discontent with the Luftwaffe was almost pathological. After General Kreipe set out the fuel situation on September 3, Hitler stunned him by remarking: 'I am considering disbanding the air force altogether and tripling the anti-aircraft artillery instead.' He repeated his criticisms at the Wolf's Lair on the fifth. Kreipe's diary recorded:

> Führer spoke first: a tirade against the Luftwaffe. No good, gets worse year after year; he was lied to permanently about production figures and also about aircraft performances. Absolute collapse in France, ground staff and signals troops had left their airfields in headlong flight to save their own skins instead of helping the army to fight.
>
> Again the question of Me-262 operations was ventilated. The same arguments as to why only 'high-speed bomber' can be considered. In milder form he again developed his idea of manufacturing only Me-262s in the future, while tripling the anti-aircraft artillery instead. . . Our fighter designs were all wrong. What we need to fight the four-engined bombers are heavy twin-engined fighters with large-calibre armament. At the Reichsmarschall's request, Colonel [Hans] Boehm-Tettelbach, who

had commanded a fighter squadron, was called in. From his own experience he explained why even heavy fighter aircraft with fighter escorts were not the best way of combating heavy bombers. Boehm-Tettelbach was rudely sent packing.

Göring however provided Hitler with the means to plug the yawning breach between the Seventh Army on the German frontier and the North Sea. On September 4 Hitler ordered Student to establish a new army, the First Parachute Army, along the Albert Canal in Belgium – a meagre force with twenty-five tanks and thirty-five batteries of 88-millimetre anti-aircraft guns to defend a sixty-mile line from Maastricht to Antwerp; the line from Antwerp to the sea would be taken over by the remnants of the Fifteenth Army struggling over the Scheldt Estuary.

Farther south the rout was also halted, after Hitler, Keitel, and Bormann issued draconian orders to the commanding generals and the gauleiters. When the gauleiters warned Bormann that the military headquarters were moving into luxury hotels and châteaux inside the German frontier, Hitler stepped in with an order to his generals to house their staffs in the most humble quarters practicable. As in East Prussia, all along the western frontier women and children, young and old, were digging hastily improvised fortifications. To halt the Allied invasion, the factories were turning out bazookas by the hundred thousand, in addition to the extra tanks, artillery, and ammunition Hitler had ordered for his great winter counterattack – the 'great opportunity' that 'fog, night, and snow' would afford him, as he prophesied on September 1.

The Allies were short of fuel, as the best French ports were still denied to them by German garrisons. But Jodl argued against launching any major attack until November 1. Himmler's Volksgrenadier training programme and Speer's special arms production effort were geared to the November 1 date that Hitler had set in mid-August. Hitler agonised over the coming offensive. The hours of inactivity forced on him by his doctors gave him time to think, or rather to brood. As he gazed for hours on end at the ceiling of his bunker bedroom, a far more adventurous campaign took shape in his mind.

On about September 12 he sent for Jodl, who fetched a map. Together they unfurled it on the white bedspread. Hitler told him that he had decided to strike again through the Ardennes – scene of his 1940 triumph – and seize Antwerp as soon as winter closed in. That day he established a

new SS panzer army in Germany and transferred the robust SS General Sepp Dietrich from the Fifth Panzer Army to command it, camouflaging the move's importance by telling General Hasso von Manteuffel, his successor, that he felt better use could be made of Dietrich at home than in the field. The Sixth SS Panzer Army was to be the spearhead of Rundstedt's Ardennes campaign.

WHY THE SS? The answer lay partly in the army's unencouraging record in the west. Besides, the Gestapo reports – remorselessly fed to Hitler by Bormann and Fegelein – laid bare the moral decay into which most army generals had apparently relapsed: Beck, an amiable procrastinator and embittered ponderer; Witzleben, the pessimist whose only reading was schoolgirl books from his wife's library; Eduard Wagner, a bureaucratic empire builder of pathological vanity. In Olbricht's cellars investigators found a thousand bottles of wine. Fromm had flown regularly by plane on private hunting parties, sending his empty Mercedes on ahead by road. While the armies cried out for troops, the conspirators had squandered able-bodied soldiers on petty household jobs or on guarding their bomb-damaged homes. Because of the fuel crisis, teams of oxen were now having to haul the Me-262 jet aircraft onto the runways of German airfields. But according to Gestapo reports Stauffenberg had had his army chauffeur drive him a hundred miles a day or more on private excursions – in addition, his home was said to be full of black-market alcohol and other luxuries.

After the regular war conference on September 16, Hitler asked certain men to remain behind – among them Jodl, Guderian, Buhle, Fegelein, and Hewel. Kreipe's diary records that Jodl began by stating that some fifty-five German divisions at present confronted ninety-six enemy divisions in the west.

'The Führer interrupts Jodl: he has resolved to mount a counterattack from the Ardennes, with Antwerp as the target.' He considered that the German defensive position was strong enough to outweigh the enemy's numerical advantage. 'The present front can easily be held! Our own attacking force will consist of thirty new Volksgrenadier divisions and new panzer divisions, plus panzer divisions from the eastern front. Split the British and American armies at their seam, then a new Dunkirk!'

With Antwerp in German hands, this time the encircled enemy armies would have no port from which to escape. 'Guderian objects because of situation on eastern front,' Kreipe's diary adds. 'Jodl refers to enemy air

supremacy,' and: 'Führer demands one thousand five hundred fighters by November 1!'

Kreipe's reasoned objections were overruled. 'Acid comments. That's why our offensive will begin in a bad-weather period, when the enemy air force is grounded too. Von Rundstedt will take command.' On pain of death, Hitler ordered them to keep this secret to themselves.

American troops were now standing on German soil, and a bloody fight for Aachen, the first big German city, had begun. Hitler issued the following secret message to his commanders on September 16, instructing them to pass it on to their troops by word of mouth.

> The fighting in the west has now spilled over onto German soil. German towns and villages will become battlefields. This fact must instil fanaticism into our fight and spur on every able-bodied man in the combat zone to make a supreme effort, so that every pillbox, every city block, every village becomes a fortress against which the enemy bleeds to death or which entombs its defenders in the man-to-man fight.
>
> No longer will this be a war of movement, but a choice between holding the line or annihilation. . .

On the Russian front, the Red Army had begun a new stubborn attack on Schörner's Army Group North. The Narva line was breached, and on September 16, Guderian and Schörner both came to Hitler to appeal for permission to abandon Estonia and withdraw Army Group North to a bridgehead at Riga; but Hitler was still reluctant, as Schörner's thirty-three divisions were tying down over a hundred of the enemy – the familiar 'Crimea' argument. Besides, he disclosed to the generals, he had to keep some pawns in hand as the Russians were currently extending feelers to him. This time Hitler authorised his minister to put out counter-feelers – but the Russian intermediary never showed up at the rendezvous.

On September 17, 1944, German speculation about the Allies' next move in the west was dramatically terminated. Instead of attempting a direct frontal assault on the West Wall, the Allies launched a sudden airborne attack on key river bridges in Holland; the attack was designed to capture a succession of important crossings from Eindhoven as far as the Rhine bridge at Arnhem, fifty miles to the north. British and American armoured spearheads plunged northward along the corridor thus created toward the Zuider

Zee; their mission was to cut off all Hitler's troops in Holland and destroy the V-2 rocket-launching sites near The Hague.

Hitler's heart missed a beat at the news. His Luftwaffe chief recorded in his diary: 'Non-stop telephoning and issuing of orders for the defence. Führer telephones. Afternoon, over to see him and Jodl again. Quite a flap on.'

More than fifteen hundred Allied troop transports and five hundred gliders had taken part. Arnhem seemed virtually undefended: it was not even in the German combat zone. The town commandant had been killed in an air raid that morning, leaving only his elderly operations officer, one Major Ernst Schleifenbaum, in charge. In one defence unit were men of twenty-eight different commands, World War I veterans every one; each was given a captured gun and twenty rounds, and sent out to defend the city and its bridge against ten thousand enemy paratroops until help arrived. 'When Field Marshal Model came on the telephone,' wrote Schleifenbaum some weeks later, 'and said, "You are responsible to me for holding Arnhem!" I felt quite faint, until the old Siegerland nerves came to my aid. . . We old folks still have a thing or two in us yet.'

The Germans captured the entire Allied battle plan from a wrecked glider that same day. Although the Allies threw in fresh airborne forces the next morning, Arnhem remained in German hands – after Aachen, the second defensive triumph for Hitler following a long run of defeats in the west. When the exhausted British fell back toward Nijmegen, they left over 1,000 dead and 6,450 prisoners behind at Arnhem.

Hitler did not at first recognise this famous battle as the tactical victory it was. He thundered at the 'idiocy of allowing the enemy to capture bridges [at Nijmegen] undestroyed'; and the success did nothing to offset the Party's campaign against Göring. To add to the Reichsmarschall's discomfiture, the British night raids had begun again. The bomber squadrons had lost nothing in ferocity over the weeks of enforced absence in France.

Ancient Königsberg was now in ruins, and one saturation attack on Darmstadt's centre in September had left twelve thousand civilian dead, burned alive in the firestorm, in half an hour. Hitler began to consider replacing Göring by a front-line Luftwaffe commander like General von Greim. On September 18 his fury at Göring was still unabated. 'During the Führer's conference,' wrote Kreipe, 'there are fresh reports of airborne landings in Holland. The Führer loses his temper and rages at the Luftwaffe's failure; he demands to know immediately what fighter sorties are being flown in Holland to engage the enemy. I telephone Luftflotte "Reich" and

find out that because of the weather hardly any sorties are being flown today. The Führer takes my report to this effect as an excuse for the most biting criticism. "The entire air force is incompetent, yellow, and leaving me in the lurch. I've had fresh reports that numerous Luftwaffe units are retreating across the Rhine."' General Kreipe asked for concrete examples. Hitler retorted, 'I have no desire to speak with you again. Tomorrow I want to talk to the Reichsmarschall – no doubt you can arrange *that!*'

Kreipe wrote the next day: 'The Führer's war conference follows: icy atmosphere. I am ignored completely. At its end Göring sees Hitler. He tries to take me in with him, but Hitler indicates that he wants to speak with him alone. About eight P.M. the Reichsmarschall comes back from the Führer, absolutely broken and washed up. After a long silence he tells me the Führer doesn't like me, as I have no faith in him, I am a typical staff-officer type and calculating machine, defeatist and unreliable; I am just full of objections and contradictions.'

Shortly after midnight Fegelein informed General Kreipe that Hitler had forbidden him to set foot within the Wolf's Lair again.

DEEP-ROOTED factors contributed to this arbitrary and irrational behaviour. One was that on the eighteenth he had just authorised Schörner's army group to abandon Estonia on the Baltic after all. Another factor was the unspoken fear that with each cumulating illness since July 20 his own life was slipping inconclusively away.

With his splitting headache undiminished, he drove to the hospital for head X-rays to be made on September 19. After three X-ray photographs had been taken – all of which were found by the Allies in 1945* – he shook hands with the Catholic nursing sisters, then asked his doctor, Hasselbach, to guide him around the wards where the victims of July 20 lay. General Schmundt was now in high fever (his wife wrote in her diary: 'Afternoon: Führer here again, works like medicine'); at his bedside Hitler began to weep, because the doctors had advised him his adjutant had not long to live: gangrene had set in.

* In 1968 the Soviet writer Lev Bezymenski published good photographs of the jaw taken from a corpse found in the chancellery garden in 1945. As we first demonstrated in *Die Zeit* (Hamburg) on January 14, 1972, this jaw was identical to that found on the X-rays of September 19, 1944 *and* to that sketched from memory by Hitler's dentist, Professor Blaschke, under American interrogation in 1945.

'I was called in too late,' Morell had gravely assured him that morning. 'Otherwise I could have saved him with my penicillin.'

When Hitler rejoined his car he found several hundred people thronging outside. They burst out cheering as they recognised him; many were on stretchers, and many were lacking an arm or a leg, but their emotion at this, their first encounter with their Führer, could be seen glistening in their eyes. His hold on their feelings was still unique. A few days before, one of his SS staff had written privately: 'Up here you get a far broader view, you see things with a different eye. . . With our Führer, nothing can possibly go wrong for Germany or any of us; he is quite simply *wunderbar.*'

OVER THE next week Hitler's dimly lit bunker rooms seemed crowded with doctors. Professor von Eicken came from Berlin to perform the sinus irrigation. Giesing and Hasselbach were treating his other injuries. His stomach spasms had returned, and even Dr. Koester's antigas pills were failing to exorcise them. In the daylight Hitler's skin and eyes took on an unhealthy yellowish hue. General Nikolaus von Vormann, the retiring commander of the Ninth Army who visited him on September 26, would write afterward:

> It was a tired, broken man who greeted me, then shuffled over to a chair, his shoulders drooping, and asked me to sit down. Without waiting to find out my business, he began to speak of our coming final victory and the new secret weapons. When I tried to tell him of the impossible situation on the Vistula and in Warsaw, whence I came, he interrupted me, 'Your successor [General Smilo Freiherr von] Lüttwitz will get help.' He spoke so softly and hesitantly it was hard to understand him. His hands trembled so much he had to grip them between his knees.

Later that day, September 26, Heinrich Himmler arrived with a bulging briefcase of things to discuss. Heading his agenda was the topic, '*Treason since 1939*.' In a locked safe at Abwehr headquarters outside Berlin, Gestapo investigators had found documents proving that Mayor Goerdeler, General Oster, General Beck, and above all Vice-Admiral Canaris – the slippery former chief of Intelligence – had been plotting Hitler's overthrow since 1939 at least. Canaris and his men had deliberately betrayed the plans and dates of Hitler's 1940 western campaign ('Yellow') to the enemy.

These documents had been assembled by two of the admiral's staff – General Oster and Hans von Dohnanyi – with a view toward someday pros-

ecuting Brauchitsch, then the army's Commander in Chief, for refusing to aid the anti-Hitler plotters. From General Muñoz Grandes, who had commanded Spain's contingent in Russia, Hitler had already learned some time ago that Canaris had personally warned Franco against bringing Spain in to the war on Hitler's side. Since his arrest in July, Canaris had told ingenious tales, but those who had rejected the Third Reich – Oster and Dohnanyi – betrayed their friend Canaris equally willingly in a face-to-face encounter. General Alexander von Pfuhlstein, former commander of the 'Brandenburg' (Commando) Division, had been arrested on September 4, and he had strongly implicated Canaris in the murder plot as well. The admiral had once discussed using the division to storm the Wolf's Lair; Canaris had confidently predicted Germany's defeat for December 1943. Colonel Georg Hansen advised his questioners to search for Canaris's diaries; these damning documents were eventually found in the locked safe of another Abwehr colonel who had succumbed to the suicide epidemic after July 20 – they vanished at the end of the war.

The documents showed that the plotters had sent the then Colonel Georg Thomas – another of Keitel's department heads – to win over Halder and Brauchitsch in November 1939. Halder had refused: Britain's fight was against the whole of Germany, he had said, not just Hitler. A 1939 'study' by Oster dealt explicitly with a coup d'état. There were voluminous memoranda by General Beck, and scattered pages of the fabled Canaris diary throwing a revealing new light on the 1943 Black Chapel case and Abwehr dealings with the Vatican. In April 1940, the documents indicated, Thomas had shown Halder a treacherous message from one Dr. Joseph Müller: the Vatican was willing to intercede with the British and French provided Hitler and Ribbentrop were first eliminated. On being informed of this approach, Brauchitsch had proposed to Halder that Thomas be arrested.* The same Joseph Müller had betrayed the date of 'Yellow' to the Vatican – evidently on Abwehr instructions, since Canaris ordered the affair hushed up. Oster had also warned the Dutch directly.

Hitler grimly informed Jodl of the news Himmler had brought. The facts about Admiral Canaris were so terrible, he said, that he could not make them public until the war was over; then there would be a state trial at which the German people could take their revenge. A few days later

* Only ears after this book was first published did the author's private secretary for twenty years reveal that she was the daughter-in-law of General Thomas, no less.
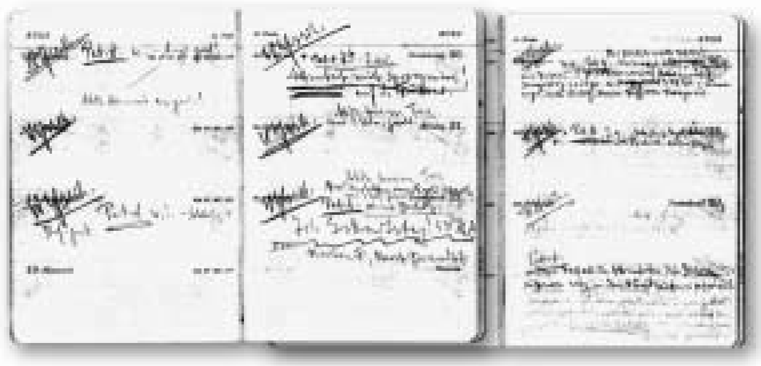
Morell would note, after Hitler complained of bad indigestion and stomach spasms, that he had had 'a lot of upsets the last few days, apparently.'

In a special memorandum the physician recorded a few days later Hitler's own commentary on his ongoing martyrdom: 'Says that the weeks since July 20 have been the worst of his life. He has fought a heroic battle the likes of which nobody, no German, could ever imagine. He has stayed on his feet despite the worst pains and hours of dizziness and nausea (about which, despite my questions, he never told me). And he has conquered them all with iron determination. Frequently, he says, he was in danger of collapsing but by sheer willpower he always kept himself under control.'

A PERSONAL catastrophe was about to befall Hitler. But first Martin Bormann secured from him, on September 26, 1944, a signature ordering the Party to raise a people's army, a *Volkssturm*, by public levy on every able-bodied man between sixteen and sixty for the defence of German soil. The original idea was Guderian's. Alarmed to see his siege-defence troops in the east drained off to the West Wall, he had proposed a local territorial reserve *(Landsturm)* for temporarily plugging any breaches in his eastern defences. Bormann, however, could point to the results the Party had achieved in the west; Rundstedt had highly praised him. Hitler trusted Bormann, and the Party got the job of raising the Volkssturm – to mobilise 'the people' just as Stalin had mobilised the factory workers of Moscow and Leningrad in 1941.

During the night of September 27, Hitler was attacked by stomach cramps of such intensity that he had to fight back the animal urge to scream. The next morning he refused to get up; wearing a grey flannel dressing gown over his shapeless army night-shirt, he lay with empty and expressionless eyes on his bed. Morell was summoned, diagnosed only routine intestinal troubles, and gave him liver-extract injections; but the pains got worse. The fat doctor was seen leaving the bunker pale and sweating, for he knew only too well that his medical experience had its limitations. At nine P.M., after tea, Morell commented in his diary: 'I [have] told the Führer that he is looking a bit yellowish. . .'

Dr. Giesing recognised a case of jaundice, but Morell angrily denied it and insisted on dosing his agonised client with castor oil at one end and warm camomile-tea enemas at the other – which was not easy, as Hitler prudishly refused to allow him access to his nether regions and insisted on a vain (and messy) attempt at administering the enema himself, seated on a toilet.



Professor Morell's diary records the bomb attempt of July 20 and the unexpected sequel (bottom right): Hitler's tremor stopped (U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

The pain grew worse. Between September 28 and 30 Hitler lost six pounds. Blood tests and urinalyses were taken, but Morell refused to show them to his fellow doctors. The Wolf's Lair was paralysed. The war conferences were cancelled for days on end. Admiral Puttkamer, recovering from his bomb injuries, hobbled in on crutches to read out the daily notes on the war situation, but for days Hitler just lay there with no reaction at all.

On October 1, General Schmundt died of his injuries from Stauffenberg's bomb. Richard Schulze, Hitler's SS adjutant, found him sitting on the edge of his bed in black trousers, collarless shirt, and braces; he was obviously downcast. It was Schulze's thirtieth birthday. Hitler handed him the obligatory Glashütte gold watch. 'I don't suppose I'll be presenting any more of these!' he exclaimed. Three days later, Puttkamer ushered in Schmundt's widow. Hitler began to weep. 'It is you who must console me,' he sighed, 'for mine was the greater loss.'

HIS MYSTERIOUS illness continued. Dr. Giesing surreptitiously sampled a few of the 'Dr. Koester's' black antigas pills himself and suffered the same testiness, aversion to light, thirst, loss of appetite, enhanced sense of taste, and even the stomach cramps that had afflicted Hitler. Giesing scrutinised the Latin label on the small flat aluminium box: 'Extr. nux. vomic. 0.04; extr. bellad. 0.04' – strychnine and atropine. According to his calculations, Hitler had since Stalingrad been cumulatively *poisoning himself* with these two substances. Dr. Giesing read out the relevant entries in the poisons manual to a chastened Führer:

> Atropine acts on the central nervous system first as a stimulant, then as a paralyser. In humans it primarily affects the forebrain, manifesting itself in a state of psychic exaltation. A state of cheerfulness develops, coupled with vivid flights of imagination, talkativeness, and restlessness, visual and aural hallucinations, and fits of delirium which may be peaceful and serene but may equally degenerate into acts of violence and frenzy.

Strychnine, on the other hand, accumulates in the body, acting on the nervous system to increase the acuity of all the senses. 'After heavy doses the accentuated sensitivity to light may turn into downright aversion to light; and the other senses show similar changes. The senses of hearing and touch are accentuated, and for a time the senses of smell and taste may become more acute.' So fiercely could strychnine hypersensitise the nervous system that lockjaw could result from a normally harmless stimulus.

The Doctors' Plot that now developed was only short-lived. All Morell's rivals – and they were legion – closed in for the kill. Professor Brandt, Hitler's surgeon since 1934, hurried from Berlin, surreptitiously obtained a sample of the Führer's urine, had it tested for strychnine, and triumphantly accused Morell of criminal negligence. Hitler and Morell unaccountably closed ranks. 'Every other German has the right to choose his own doctor,' whined Hitler. 'I have chosen Morell.'

Professor Morell nevertheless took fright and sought an alibi. 'When I visited the Führer last night,' he carefully recorded on October 5, 'I asked him – if I might ask for this one tiny favour – to give me a brief note confirming that *I* never issued any instructions that he should take quantities of antigas pills every day, and furthermore that I have repeatedly called for a gastrointestinal X-ray and an examination of the contents of his stomach, but that he never gave permission. The Führer agreed to this and said he would do this in the form of a letter to me.'

Hitler reassured Morell that he had already told the other doctors that he himself was to blame. 'All the same,' pleaded Morell, 'I should be grateful if I could have that in writing as a safeguard for myself.'

Hitler not only indulged Morell: on his instructions Bormann dismissed the astonished rival doctors on the spot, and even Dr. Giesing, the ENT-specialist, was paid off on October 9.

Shortly after, Himmler was seen heading toward Hitler's bunker with his own personal doctor in tow – the thirty-six-year-old orthopædic surgeon Dr. Ludwig Stumpfegger, a tall slim SS major with a brilliant reputation.

Stumpfegger replaced Brandt, Hasselbach, and Giesing on Hitler's personal staff.

Hitler's irrational and often infuriating loyalty to his old faithfuls saved Göring as it had saved Morell. On September 21 Hitler had interviewed General von Greim, commander of the Sixth Air Force on the eastern front, and asked him to become Göring's 'Deputy Commander in Chief.' Greim discussed it thoroughly with Himmler, Fegelein, and Bormann over the next two weeks. Then Göring rebelled and sent him back to the east. In mid-October he went off hunting on Rominten Heide.

At the Wolf's Lair, General Eckhard Christian alone represented the Luftwaffe when Hitler's war conferences resumed. The war stagnated anyway during Hitler's two-week illness. Ominous rumblings still came from Hungary; planning for the Ardennes offensive continued; in Warsaw the Polish uprising collapsed; in northern Norway, Hitler authorised the Twentieth Army to fall back on the Lyngen Fjord-Narvik line; in the Balkans he ordered all Greece, southern Macedonia, and southern Albania abandoned to the enemy

A melancholy report reached him on the last days of German rule in Estonia. Schörner had allowed ten days for the evacuation starting on September 18. In seventy ships the German navy had snatched the last Germans from the Baltic ports and evacuated a hundred thousand Estonian refugees as well. The local population could hardly believe that the Germans were letting the Russians return, and many announced that they would vanish into the forests and wait for the Germans to come back, as come they surely must. 'The last Germans to sail out could see a huge Estonian flag unfurled from the tower of the ancient Teutonic castle, "Lanky Hermann," and the German war ensign flew alongside – a sign that there were still Estonians minded to put up a fight against the Bolsheviks.'

On October 7 a big Russian attack began. The news that East Prussia itself was threatened brought Hitler out of his sickroom. The generals urged him to leave the Wolf's Lair, but his answer was always the same: 'The East Prussians would say I was leaving them to the Russians, and they'd be right. The wretched people here have already had one taste of the Russian reign of terror in 1914 and 1915. I want to spare them a second dose.'

In mid-October 1944 one problem could no longer be shelved: the future of Erwin Rommel. The field marshal had recovered from his crash injuries.

The Gestapo agents shadowing his movements reported that he went for walks 'leaning on his son' Manfred; but through Bormann came reports of local Nazi officials, who had heard Rommel still uttering mutinous remarks.

The evidence against him seemed complete. The anxious testimony of Chief of Staff Hans Speidel to the Gestapo neatly complemented what Hofacker had already blurted out: Speidel had testified by October 4 – the date of his own trial by an army Court of Honour – that Colonel von Hofacker had told him of a plot against the Führer, and that he had dutifully passed this information on to his superior, Rommel. 'He did not realise,' Ernst Kaltenbrunner quoted Speidel as saying, 'that Rommel kept the warning to himself.'

On about October 7 Hitler showed the damning Speidel and Hofacker testimonies to Keitel. Keitel phoned Rommel's villa that day, inviting him to a meeting; suspecting nothing, Rommel declined to come, pleading his head injury. This left only a direct appeal to his sense of dignity.

At Hitler's dictation on the twelfth Keitel wrote Rommel a letter advising him to come to see the Führer if he considered himself innocent, or to take the appropriate steps as an officer and gentleman if he did not; otherwise he would be turned over to the People's Court.

General Wilhelm Burgdorf – Schmundt's burly successor – and his law officer General Ernst Maisel carried the letter to Rommel's villa near Ulm at lunchtime on October 14. Rommel took the hint (although he was innocent of any conspiracy against the Führer): at that evening's war conference Hitler was informed briefly that Rommel had 'died of his injuries.' His only comment was an expressionless 'There goes another of the Old Guard.'

Burgdorf returned with the field marshal's cap and baton and reported to Hitler and Keitel. He reported that Rommel had inquired whether the Führer was aware of the two statements, and had then asked for time to consider. Burgdorf had asked him to choose poison rather than the more conventional pistol; the Führer had, he said, promised a state funeral with full honours to preserve Rommel's popular reputation.

Even Hitler's adjutants did not find out. On October 15 or 16, Colonel von Amsberg drafted the customary obituary announcement for the *Army Gazette*. For a field marshal however only the Führer himself could sign. Days passed, and Amsberg eventually inquired whether the wording ought perhaps to be altered in some way. Hitler bit his lip and virtuously exclaimed, 'I will not sign this obituary. I will not lie!'

On the Brink of a Volcano

On October 15, 1944, the day after Rommel's sudden death, Hitler's agents deposed the Hungarian regent and brought 'a thousand years of Hungarian history' to an end. The coup had its origins in July, when Horthy had sent his adjutant General Béla Miklós to Hitler with a letter announcing his intention of appointing a military government; Hitler had received the general on July 21, and evidently made some promise about the Hungarian Jews, because four days later Himmler ordered the deportations to cease.

The Reichsführer had already started talks with Allied intermediaries on an alternative means of disposing of the Jews – by barter, in exchange for goods or foreign currency; on July 20 Ribbentrop had advised Edmund Veesenmayer, his representative in Budapest, that the Allies had rejected the barter proposal. As his own pencilled notes reveal, at about this time Himmler debated with Hitler the 'transfer of the Jews abroad.' 'Setting them free against foreign currency, [while retaining] the most important as hostages' was the proposal – to which the Reichsführer added his own comment: 'Am against it'; as he subsequently checked the proposal (✓), adding the stipulation that the currency must come 'from abroad,' Hitler evidently overruled him. The first 318 Hungarian Jews were released from Bergen-Belsen camp and transferred to Switzerland; but Himmler's intermediaries were asking for trucks in exchange ('to be used only on the eastern front'), and although further consignments of Jews were allowed to leave – 1,355 in December and 1,100 in February 1945 – the deal collapsed.

There was no act of violence that Hitler was not prepared to commit to keep Hungary – his only remaining petroleum supplier – within his domain, his 'minimum economic region.' From the end of August 1944, when Horthy openly courted Hitler's disapproval and announced that he had ap-

pointed General Geza Lákatos to head a military government in place of the ailing and pro-German Döme Sztójay, one alarm signal after another was reported to Hitler.

Initially, he fought to win time, hoping for a spectacular military victory by General Friessner to restore the Hungarian Cabinet's flagging spirit. On September 7 however Horthy issued a semi-ultimatum demanding five fresh German panzer divisions within 'twenty-four hours' or he would ask the enemy governments for an armistice. Hitler ordered Guderian to humour the demand insofar as possible; but the next morning, the eighth, the German air attaché telephoned urgent warnings from Budapest about 'goings-on similar to Romania.'

Hitler took this most seriously, since this general, Cuno Heribert Fuetterer, had also provided the earliest alert of the coup in Bucharest. This warning gave him five weeks' clear notice to stage in Hungary a counter-coup of the kind he had tried and failed to achieve in Romania in August.

After Antonescu's overthrow in August, the Hungarian and German general staffs had agreed to launch an offensive from Klausenburg to capture the Romanian half of Transylvania and then to hold and fortify the general line of the Carpathian Mountains. The offensive began on the fifth, but it rapidly fell apart: the Hungarian Lákatos regime suddenly stopped the invasion of Romanian Transylvania without consulting Hitler – evidently for political reasons. This excited Hitler's immediate distrust. When General Janos Vörös, Guderian's Hungarian counterpart, pleaded for more military assistance on the twelfth, the Führer told him to his face: 'I have no faith in your Lákatos government.'

He strongly suspected Horthy of plotting a Badoglio-type betrayal: the admiral wanted high-grade German troops moved to eastern Hungary; then he would sign a sudden pact with Stalin and deliver these German divisions to the enemy sword. It was a real dilemma: Hitler had evidently already written off that part of Hungary east of the Tisza River; but if he was not to lose western Hungary as well, he had no option but to take just that risk of treachery and pack every good division he had into the front line.

Together with SS Major Otto Skorzeny, Hitler began plotting ways of eliminating Horthy's baneful influence on his generals. Immediately after Antonescu's overthrow in August, the SS commander in Budapest, SS General Otto Winkelmann, had investigated the layout and security organisation of the Citadel. Now Hitler spent hours each day poring over the original

building-plans of the Citadel and its labyrinthine underground tunnels, plotting the regent's capture and overthrow with all the Machiavellian attention to detail that had once accompanied his planning for the Dirschau bridge and Eben-Emael fortress operations in 1939 and 1940.

Hitler's overall strategy in September 1944 had derived from the comforting conviction that having digested Romania, the Red Army would wheel south to realise Russia's historic ambitions in the Dardanelles – and to reach the Balkans before Britain and the United States. The Russian offensive from this very region, spilling out *northward* into the Hungarian lowlands proved the falseness of Hitler's assumption. He was losing the famous *Fingerspitzgefühl*, the strategic instinct which had served him so well in the past.

On September 23 more alarms began quietly sounding at the Wolf's Lair. German Intelligence learned that Horthy was putting out urgent feelers to the western Allies in Italy and Switzerland; mindful of Edda Ciano's escape, Hitler ordered the Luftwaffe to keep a close watch on all Hungarian airfields to prevent Horthy from sending his family out to safety in Switzerland. He discussed with Jodl the possibility of using three or four paratroop battalions to arrest the regent; some days later the plan was amended to include Skorzeny and five hundred Waffen SS troops in gliders. The scale of these operations was inevitable, because Winkelmann had learned that the Hungarian commandant of Budapest, General Bakay, was already plotting a large-scale military operation to round up German sympathisers.

On September 25 Hitler designated all Hungary a German 'operations zone,' thus bringing it under unified General Staff control to avoid the clashes of interest that had hamstrung his counter-coup in Bucharest. Ferenc Szálasi, a Hungarian right-wing leader, declared his willingness to take over the government. Millions of pamphlets were transported to Budapest in sealed police trucks ready for the coup. But these were the days in which Hitler's illness struck him down, and the coup was postponed day after day. He found out that Horthy had sent a team of negotiators to Moscow; from his sickbed, on October 3 Hitler ordered the fight for Hungary's defence to continue even though 'we are standing on the brink of a volcano.'* On the

* The terms dictated by Molotov to the Hungarian delegation on October 8, 1944, required Hungary not only to declare war on Germany 'immediately,' but to commence hostilities against them at the same time – just as Hitler had feared. Horthy cabled his acceptance of these terms on the tenth. Jozsef Dudás, one of the delegation, directed the October 1956 anti-Communist uprising in Budapest and was subsequently hanged.

sixth Winkelmann decided to force Horthy's hand, because (as he later explained to the Reichsführer) 'you can't just keep on postponing a putsch that's all ready and waiting.' He ordered four top Horthy men kidnapped, including General Bakay and Horthy's own son and heir. Bakay was netted at dawn on October 10. Later that day Himmler, Winkelmann, and SS General von dem Bach-Zelewski reported to Hitler for further orders; Bach-Zelewski was directed to take his giant 650-millimetre mortar to Budapest and support Otto Skorzeny's operation. He arrived on the thirteenth. The Nazi coup would be code-named *Panzerfaust* – 'Bazooka.'

To put teeth into their political pressure on Horthy, the Russians launched an offensive on October 6 from the area between Arad and Klausenburg, across the plains toward Debrecen and Szolnok, which was on the Tisza. General Friessner's army group would indeed have been trapped in the Carpathians, but Hitler had now assembled three panzer divisions at Debrecen and on the tenth these began a four-day tank battle which resulted in the destruction of several Soviet armoured corps. We now know that Horthy had already crossed the political Rubicon: he had issued secret orders to the First and Second Hungarian armies to retreat. Friessner was bewildered. His operations officer later wrote: 'A major crisis occurred when on October 13 a section of the Hungarians – in fact the very ones who had been most effusive in their friendship toward us gullible soldiers – changed to the enemy side in mid-battle.'

During the following night Hitler telegraphed the necessary instructions to Edmund Veesenmayer, his political agent in Budapest. The next morning, October 14, the crisis reports from Budapest multiplied. But Ambassador Rudolf Rahn had now arrived there, and so had forty-two Tiger tanks which were being conspicuously unloaded at one of the main stations. Hitler directed his regular war conference ninety minutes after midnight; it was five A.M. before he went to bed. The news from Budapest was that Horthy had summoned Veesenmayer for an audience at noon. This probably meant that the hour for Hungary's defection had arrived. During the night the Hungarian General Staff telegraphed a threat to Guderian to withdraw the Hungarian troops from the front. Guderian sent his deputy, General Wenck, to Budapest with his reply – an ultimatum to the Hungarians to stop meddling with the Hungarian divisions in Friessner's army group, and to rescind within twelve hours the orders to the First and Second Hungarian armies to retreat.

Even as this ultimatum was being delivered at ten A.M., Skorzeny's team in Budapest was kidnapping Horthy's son – luring him to an ambush by telling him that an emissary from Marshal Tito was waiting for him.

By the time that Hitler was awakened by his staff on October 15, at half-past noon, the die had therefore been cast; Horthy's son, rolled inside a carpet, was aboard a plane bound for Vienna. Let us hear Winkelmann's coarsely worded narrative of that day, in his proud report to Himmler:

> Veesenmayer showed up at Horthy's punctually at 12 noon; Horthy immediately launched into a violent tirade, complaining that we had kidnapped his son. . .
>
> Veesenmayer stood up to him like a man and didn't have to wheel out the biggest gun we had agreed on, namely to tell the old chap that if there was the least whiff of treachery we would stand his son up against a wall. Horthy threatened to quit the war, but did not commit himself positively as to when. Shortly afterward, his radio broadcast the foul proclamation. Meantime Ambassador Rahn had driven over to Horthy to appeal to his conscience.
>
> Horthy was crying like a little boy, kept clutching Rahn's hand and promising to call everything off, running to the telephone and then not speaking into it, and in general acting like somebody demented.

Horthy's armistice announcement had been broadcast at two P.M. Almost immediately the radio building was seized by a German police lieutenant. A new proclamation was broadcast, apparently signed by General Vörös, declaring Horthy's announcement of an armistice null and void and ordering the fight against the Red Army continued. Then came Ferenc Szálasi's pronouncement that he had assumed power. Horthy and his dwindling supporters retreated into the Citadel; other Hungarian ministers, 'pale and evil-smelling,' in SS General Winkelmann's words, sought German protection. Thus Horthy could hardly resist the offer put to him that evening: if he would resign and legally transfer power to Szálasi, his son would be restored to him; alternatively, at six A.M. the Citadel would be stormed.

HITLER CANCELLED the midnight war conference and retired at 1:15 A.M. to gossip with his secretaries Gerda Christian and Christa Schroeder. Shortly before four A.M. Budapest telephoned: General Lákatos had told Veesenmayer that Horthy would abdicate the next day. Horthy was asking

in return for asylum in Germany for himself and his family, and for undertakings that the Reich would not blacken his name. Hitler agreed and went to bed at four.

Thus Hungary remained in his *Festung Europa*, such as it now was. Stalin's hopes of trapping Friessner's Army Group South were crushed. General Miklós, commanding the First Army, deserted to the Russians. General Lajos von Veress, commanding the Second Army, was arrested by Friessner for ordering his army to retreat. Friessner fought a second great tank battle at Debrecen and inflicted a new defeat on the Red Army. A brief respite was thus granted to Hitler in Hungary.

In anticipation of the battle for East Prussia, Hitler had moved over into Bunker Eleven, a monstrous rebuilt complex of dormitories and offices. It would be proof against poison-gas attack, since it had its own compressed air and oxygen supplies and a U-boat air-conditioning plant in case all else broke down. Toward the end of September 1944 he had ordered a realistic reassessment of the Wolf's Lair defences against mass attack. 'We can't afford to take rash risks any longer. . . If a *Schweinerei* happens here then we're all sitting ducks – myself, my entire High Command, the Reichsmarschall, the OKH, the Reichsführer SS, and the foreign minister! What a catch we should be! If I could get my hands on the entire Russian High Command at one fell swoop, I would risk two paratroop divisions for it immediately!'

Here on the eastern front, Hitler had long lost the initiative in the face of the baffling Russian superiority. An avalanche of enemy tanks had again swamped across Army Group North and reached the Baltic coast in the second week of October.

Along the Memel River, the northern border of East Prussia itself, Model managed to establish a new front line on the twelfth, while the long-range guns of the German battle fleet held the enemy at bay. But Schörner's attempts to drive a fresh corridor through to East Prussia failed, and the twenty-six divisions of his Army Group North were again cut off – this time in Kurland, a fifty-mile square promontory into the Baltic. In this pocket the army group would remain until the war was over, a controversial appendix of Hitler's 'Barbarossa' campaign, surviving six bloody battles undefeated.

On October 16, the Red Army suddenly stormed into East Prussia evidently making for Königsberg itself. Refugee columns began streaming past Hitler's headquarters. The German divisions were outnumbered 4 to 1. By

the twenty-second Keitel was pleading with Hitler to leave for Berlin. Martin Bormann privately instructed the stenographers to begin packing for the move to the chancellery. Göring toured the nearby battlefield; but not Hitler – he was still far from well. Half the evening war conferences were cancelled so that he could retire to bed, swooning with nameless pains against which none of the doctors could effectively prescribe. Morell thought it was an inflammation of the nasopharyngeal area. His dentist, Professor Hugo Blaschke, X-rayed the jaw, found an agonising defect to the second bicuspid about which Hitler had kept silent, and was allowed to extract it.

Dr. Theo Morell gloomily wrote on October 23, 'It's real autumn here, with dense fog banks everywhere.' An atmosphere of imminent defeat lay heavily in his private rooms – an air which no conditioning plant could dispel. One secretary wrote, after it was all over: 'It made us despair to see the one man who could end all the misery with a stroke of his pen lying apathetically in bed, gazing at us with weary eyes, while all around us all Hell was loose. It was as though the Flesh had suddenly realised the futility of the efforts of his Will and had just gone on strike; and Hitler, who had never run into such disobedience before, was caught unawares by it.'

Hitler's secretaries sat each evening gossiping at his bedside. At midnight an adjutant would bring the brief war report. Sometimes Colonel von Amsberg, his Wehrmacht adjutant, spent the day touring the battlefields, then came and stood dutifully at the foot of Hitler's bed listening to the Führer ruminating on the errors he had committed in the past.

Then the miracle happened – perhaps just because the German riflemen knew that he was still there. General Hossbach's Fourth Army halted the Russian onslaught and launched a courageous counterattack; he concentrated on the enemy spearhead west of Gumbinnen. Gumbinnen was recaptured. As Hossbach then swung south to deal with the Goldap spearhead, the carnage left by the Russian Eleventh Guards Army was witnessed for the first time. Air force General Kreipe wrote in his diary: 'Visited "Hermann Göring" Panzer Corps, in combat at Gumbinnen. . . In and around Nemmendorf women and children crucified on barn doors and shot. I order photographs taken as evidence.'

The same Führer's secretary as quoted earlier described: 'Gone was his good temper. When we arrived at night for tea, he looked grim and careworn, and he had to make an effort to put these pictures and reports from the eastern front out of his mind: women raped, children massacred. . . He swore revenge. "They aren't human," he said. "They're the beasts of the

Asiatic steppes. The war I am waging against them is a fight for the dignity of European man. No price is too high for victory."'

On October 25, he told Bormann that he would definitely not leave the Wolf's Lair until the crisis in East Prussia was over. His staff nervously complied. His female secretaries asked if they ought to learn to handle pistols. 'No thank you, ladies,' responded Hitler loftily. 'I have no desire to die at the hands of one of my secretaries!'

THE BANTERING tone belied his nagging worries about his heart and vocal chords. On the twenty-fourth he had slept only two hours, and Morell found him in rather low spirits: 'Führer complains that despite a treatment that has now lasted nearly five weeks his voice is still not free. . . In his opinion there must be another focus of these bacteria somewhere else.' The doctor handed him some Cardiazol-Ephedrin for his heart and told him to take fifteen or twenty drops three times a day if he felt weak. Morell was also pipetting a camphor medication into both nostrils to help the blood supply to the mucous membranes. At midday on October 27 he found his patient cranky again: 'Says his voice is bad again – how can he be expected to go before the microphone and speak to the German people like this? Can't I [Morell] hear for myself how rough his voice is!'

'What use is increasing the blood supply to the mucous membranes,' Hitler whined, 'if the bacteria are not killed off? *They* are what matters!'

'It doesn't have to be bacteria that are causing the hoarseness,' Morell replied suavely. 'It might be the mechanical irritation that your vocal chords are permanently subjected to.'

At the war conference later that day Press Chief Otto Dietrich showed Hitler an English newspaper which reported a claim by Moscow that 1,500,000 people had been liquidated in a concentration camp at Majdanek, which the Red Army had overrun, near Lublin; by way of evidence, there was a photograph of neat stacks of combs. A hush fell on the war conference. Hitler angrily laid the newspaper aside: 'That's the "hacked-off hands" again – pure enemy propaganda!' (He told Sonnleitner after the conference that Allied propaganda had claimed in 1914 that German troops marching into Belgium had cut off babies' hands and hung the children upside down in church bells as clappers.)

The consternation among his circle at such reports persisted. A perplexed Ribbentrop showed the newspaper to his son Rudolf, visiting him on injury-leave from his Waffen SS unit. Rudolf too exclaimed, 'Father, can't

you recognise atrocity-propaganda when you see it – it's the "hacked-off hands" again!'

Ribbentrop uneasily pressed Hitler in private. 'It is Himmler's affair,' replied the Führer dismissively, 'and his alone.'

At midnight on October 27, 1944, his voice still husky and weak, Hitler phoned Dr. Goebbels with birthday greetings. 'My last weeks have been almost entirely taken up with plotting our revenge,' he explained, referring to his coming offensive in the west. Colonel von Amsberg, leaving his staff to take up a front-line command, reported to him for one last time and asked the Führer what he ought to tell the officers when he joined his new unit. With a sigh of resignation Hitler told him: 'You know for yourself how black things look. Tell them that my thoughts are always out there with my troops. I will keep trying to bring this war to a prosperous conclusion. But you know the way our Luftwaffe is, and there's no point in concealing it.'

By day and night the most devastating rain of fire in history was eating out the heart of Hitler's Europe. A five-thousand-ton deluge of bombs dropped by the British night bomber squadrons on one cowering city centre within twenty minutes was now a commonplace; they came by days as well now – nine thousand tons of incendiaries and high explosives cascaded onto Duisburg in one October day.

With France lost, the Luftwaffe had no early-warning systems to help them; conversely the enemy had stationed radar guidance systems in France enabling them to pinpoint towns as small as Bonn despite the most adverse weather. Medical supplies – drugs, serums, bandages, anaesthetics, and analgesics – were scarce or even unobtainable, as the factories had been destroyed. Epidemics were rampant, carried by lice, and by rats burrowing through the corpse-filled crevices of the ruined cities.

Synthetic rubber and oil production was hit. By October 1944 Göring had thousands of day fighters available, but now their fuel supplies were low; the refineries were blazing ruins of twisted metal. It was a vicious circle. Four times in the latter half of October Hitler taxed Göring about the Luftwaffe. Göring told him he had now saved up 3,100 aircraft to hurl en masse against the enemy bombers but he was waiting until the weather was good enough. To Hitler it seemed a strategy designed to conserve only the pilots. He again began considering supplanting Göring with Greim. On November 1 he had another ninety-minute talk with the general. Göring hurried over to the Wolf's Lair on November 3 and again on the fifth, and

talked Hitler out of it. Evidently the price that Hitler demanded in return was that Göring must appoint General Karl Koller as Luftwaffe Chief of Staff. Göring told Koller that day about the fight being waged against him by the SS, the army, and the Party. 'He talked about the situation and declared that he is just fed up,' wrote Koller that day. 'He wished he were dead. He would like to join the paratroop army and fight with it at the front, but the Führer won't let him go and has told him that only he can rebuild the Luftwaffe.' Be that as it may, Hitler's consultations with Göring about major Luftwaffe policy were now only *pro forma*. It was thanks to Hitler alone that the Me-262 was in service as a jet bomber – though five months later than he had planned. As he had predicted, the Me-262 was wreaking havoc against the large enemy troop assemblies around Nijmegen.

General Galland kept delaying his three thousand fighters' *Grosser Schlag* – the Grand Slam. Finally Hitler lost patience. He announced at a war conference on November 6: 'It's pure madness to go on turning out new aircraft all the time just so that the Luftwaffe can juggle with figures.' On the twelfth, Galland claimed he had 3,700 fighter aircraft ready. On that same day a small force of British heavy bombers attacked the crippled battleship *Tirpitz* at anchor in Tromsö Fjord. The Lancaster bombers, each carrying a ten-ton bomb, would have made easy targets; but the fighters arrived too late. After eight minutes, the huge battleship capsized, entombing one thousand young sailors in her hull. After this, Hitler did not spare Göring's feelings – least of all in public. Some days later, Göring showed him a memorandum. Hitler tossed it contemptuously aside. 'There's no point in my reading that, it's all a pack of lies!' – and he turned his back on him.

To balance his grudges, Hitler showed special favour to some. Only recently he had ordered Bormann to find a suitable estate to present to Field Marshal von Manstein. He hinted to his staff that if ever Germany began great military offensives in the east he would again send for Manstein to command. Even von Brauchitsch – whom one officer claimed to have seen riding through Berlin in full field marshal's uniform on July 20 – was restored to Hitler's favour. On August 3 he had written a letter dissociating himself from the putschists; and now that Hitler's secret order creating the Volkssturm, the People's Army, under Himmler had been made public, the elderly field marshal wrote again offering his life for Germany.

Brauchitsch was given high marks in Hitler's book for having fostered Peenemünde and the V-2 rocket project: only the V-2 rocket could still

reach London. Twenty or thirty times a day the missiles were hitting the British capital – a terrifying weapon of destruction, each colossal blast followed a minute *later* by the supersonic double-bang of the missile's arrival. 'No population can hold out under such an uninterrupted bombardment,' Hitler gloated to his secretaries. 'Their nerves won't stand it, because there is no warning from the sirens. Sheer panic will grip the masses and drive them out into the open countryside. But just imagine what that means – for millions of people to swarm out to where there is neither roof nor rafter to accommodate them. . . It will be an avalanche of misery and suffering, because even when the people get there, the local villagers will regard them as a plague. What parliamentary government can survive that!'

Ever since his two-week jaundice illness his interest in domestic affairs had been only perfunctory. He had concerned himself almost exclusively with military command decisions. On September 24, 1944, he had signed his last law onto the statute book (a minor item permitting Wehrmacht members to belong to the Nazi Party). He now became Hitler the Warlord, pure and simple. In the east and west, in the Balkans, in Italy, and in Norway he was having to yield ground to the enemy which he might have been able to defend with his newly forming strategic reserves, but for his unshakeable decision to concentrate those reserves in a great winter counteroffensive in the Ardennes.

Each day was, for Hitler personally, a battle. His physique damaged by the July 20 bomb, and the illness, he could barely muster the strength to hold his evening war conference. After supper on October 29, for example, he received Fegelein, Puttkamer, and Sonnleitner in his bunker bedroom to hear their reports on SS, Wehrmacht, and foreign affairs, then he sat sipping tea until 3:30 A.M. But he could not sleep: Dr. Morell was fetched at 6:10 A.M. – no doubt with sedatives – and again after 'breakfast' eight hours later.

Morell's glucose- and vitamin-laden hypodermic syringes were getting on Hitler's nerves. For his part the professor noticed that because of Hitler's squatting for months on end in his bunker without natural light or fresh air his blood lacked oxygen; Morell's needles often left painful and raw patches on Hitler's arms. On the first day of November Hitler remarked irritably, 'Perhaps it is the injections themselves that are allowing bacteria into my body.' The next day, the military news being better, Morell was not sent for. On the third he recorded, '[Hitler] slept well (six or seven hours),

tho' with sedatives. . . Complains a lot about the tremor in his left leg and hands. However the latter, when extended with fingers spread, showed no visible tremor.' 'When the 20th of July happened,' Hitler told him, 'all this shaking suddenly stopped. But now it's crept back again, and it's worse than ever.' Morell attributed it to the constant burdens and upsets.

'What is to be done against it?' asked Hitler.

'Peace and quiet, and keep out of trouble,' replied the doctor, adding in his diary the observation: 'These things are all impossible.'

HITLER'S BIG Ardennes gamble would depend on the eastern front remaining stable. General Guderian predicted that Stalin would delay his main offensive until the frost. Thwarted in East Prussia by Hossbach's counterattack, the Red Army had stormed Schörner's army group in Kurland on October 27; again the enemy lost heavily. On the eleventh day General Wenck said triumphantly, 'We have already knocked out five hundred and twenty-two tanks.' When Hitler soberly pointed out that the Russians had 'huge numbers of tanks,' Wenck continued, ' – against which our own material losses are only three 75-millimetre guns, seven light field-howitzers, nine 122-millimetre Russian guns, and one 150-millimetre.'

'Slight losses indeed,' conceded Hitler, '– when we stand fast! All our losses have come from our "glorious" retreats – the kind of retreat one makes to "regain one's tactical freedom."'

BY NOVEMBER 5 the Red Army had also been thrown out of the East Prussian town of Goldap. 'They are staking everything on their artillery,' Hitler pronounced. 'Their "divisions" are all under-strength, just conglomerations of a few thousand men.' Wenck agreed.

Hitler tried to read Stalin's mind. Where would it be best to launch the great winter offensive? 'He must have had his doubts,' commented Hitler, reflecting on the German victory in East Prussia. 'He has always been wary of sending his troops into a highly developed area, as they would be bound to realise the absurdity of Bolshevism after seeing it. So it is possible that he'll move them into here' – indicating the Vistula bridgeheads in Poland – 'and that up here [on the Baltic] he'll say he's got what he wanted by snapping off this thing,' meaning Army Group North.

Some minutes later, after hearing of an aircraft reconnaissance report on the menacing Soviet bridgehead across the Vistula at Baranov, Hitler again postulated: 'That's where we must be on the lookout. Everything he's

doing up here is just a diversion. . . Besides, he must sense that up here on German soil [*i.e.*, East Prussia] he'll have to shed a lot of blood – a lot.'

Hairline cracks were now appearing in the enemy alliance. Stalin had given British and American military delegations twenty-four hours to get out of Bulgaria. His invasion of Romania and Bulgaria flagrantly violated the Teheran agreements of 1943 – as the Cicero documents showed. Stalin's annexation of eastern Poland was causing uproar in London and Washington.

On October 10 moreover Himmler had shown Hitler a strong clue that Stalin was again putting out oblique feelers to him. At about this time Sonnleitner followed Hitler into his bunker bedroom one evening and asked if Ribbentrop might now take up the feelers that the masseur of Madame Kollontay, the Soviet ambassador in Stockholm, was putting out. A German-Soviet rapprochement, even at this late date, was Ribbentrop's dream.

Hitler wearily threw himself onto his bed, dangling his legs over the edge, and argued against giving any sign that could be interpreted as weakness. Sonnleitner used every logical argument at his disposal. Finally Hitler agreed to the request – but added cynical words that sent a chill down the diplomat's spine: 'If this does lead to peace with the Soviets, we shall have to fight them all over again on some more propitious occasion. Communism is never going to abandon its aim of Bolshevik world domination. Nobody else will be able to fight this battle. I myself shall have to win it for the German people.'

In Britain, Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden admitted in Parliament that relations with Stalin were strained. Neither Stalin nor Hitler could fail to see that the British were still purposefully allowing the Wehrmacht to escape unhindered from the southern Balkans to the battlefields in Hungary. ('It's obvious the British could have done something here, given the position we're in,' Jodl commented to Hitler. 'They only had to invade somewhere along here' – indicating the Adriatic coast of the Balkans – 'and they would have cut us off completely down there.')

In Iran, British and American oil interests had already provoked a government crisis over their dispute with the Russian oil interests. In Greece the government appointed by the British military commander had disbanded the Communist guerrilla units.

At the same time German Intelligence had reported Russian tanks appearing on Bulgaria's frontier with Turkey, only a hundred miles from the coveted Dardanelles.

Hitler speculated:

> Perhaps they [the British] have disengaged a tactical wing [from the fighting in Italy] to be on the safe side. Because for all the polite phrases they are swapping, the tension seems to be building up. Perhaps they are disengaging it to transfer it to Greece or to here –

at this point Hitler's finger must have tapped northern Turkey.

> – It's quite definite that the Russian [Stalin] will attack there. . . And when you're on one shore of the Dardanelles you don't just stop there. . . You can only use the waterway if you control both shores. So he'll have to take the second bit as well [southern Turkey].

'And that,' concluded Hitler logically, 'will start the whole structure toppling. . . My view is the British are standing by, because vital interests are at stake.'

Meanwhile the OKW instructed German military attachés not to discuss the coming East–West conflict at all.

WITH HITLER's last European ally gone, and the German nation nevertheless unbowed by bombing or military reverses, the Allies could only hope for a speedy victory if the Führer was dead or a power struggle broke out. Rumours abounded in the foreign press that he was ill, exhausted, in an asylum, or even Himmler's captive. 'According to this one,' Hitler guffawed, reading one news report aloud to his staff, 'I'm a prisoner in my own house, my "residence" on the Obersalzberg!'

Prisoner he already was in one sense at the Wolf's Lair – trapped within his own fragile frame. At night he could sleep only with the help of Phanodorm. Professor Morell, not privy to plans for the coming great offensive, urged him to 'go away' for eight or ten days, but Hitler disclosed to him on November 7 that he had first to face up to a number of vital decisions. Shortly after midnight Hitler suddenly sent for the physician, who noted the next day: 'All of a sudden the Führer was attacked by spasms in the sternum and massive gas build-up in the abdomen. As he told me, he was momentarily about to make the biggest decisions of his life, hence the increasingly violent nervous strains.' Morell injected the morphine-like narcotics Eukodal and Eupaverin intravenously, but the injections only partly

blanketed the pain. 'The Führer thanked me profusely for this first aid,' Morell entered pedantically in his diary.

> The Führer then told me that I couldn't imagine how deeply the recent [doctors'] intrigues against me had angered him. 'For those idiots [Brandt, Hasselbach, and Giesing] not to have realised the damage they were doing to me! I would have found myself suddenly without a doctor, although these gentlemen must know that you have already saved my life several times in the eight years that you have been with me. . . I am not an ungrateful person, my dear Doktor. If we both see our way through this war in one piece, then you shall see how generously I shall reward you afterward!'

On the same afternoon Hitler moved into his new, larger bunker. Its rooms were much more spacious, and it even had large windows looking out over woods and fields. On November 12 Morell had to abandon him temporarily – pleading a heart complaint – but his assistant Dr. Richard Weber proved equally acceptable to Hitler. On some days Weber found himself called to Hitler's bunker three or four times; on November 13 Hitler was examined by the dentist Blaschke and by SS Major Stumpfegger as well. His throat was becoming sore, and he was finding it difficult to eat. He postponed the necessary X-rays, fearing they might reveal a malignancy.

THE PREPARATIONS for his top-secret counterattack in the Ardennes were nearing completion. At Arnhem, Aachen, and now Antwerp, a series of costly battles had been inflicted on the Allies: Aachen, the westernmost town of the Reich, had barred the American advance across the West Wall. Hitler had ordered the town defended house by house, just as Stalingrad had been; he repeated his Paris order – that on entering, the enemy was to find only a field of ruins. When Aachen was overrun on October 21, the Allies found that Hitler had used the respite to rebuild the West Wall line to the east. Every ton of supplies that the enemy moved to the Aachen area for the later drive to the Ruhr pleased Hitler more – for then the booty from the Ardennes attack would be bigger. He told his staff he would not be tempted to divert reinforcements from his own Ardennes build-up 'even if the enemy pushes through to Cologne.'

This *was* General Eisenhower's main objective for early November. But Rundstedt launched a strong spoiling attack on October 27, and Eisenhow-

er's plans were delayed by two weeks. Meanwhile General Patton, south of the Ardennes, had assured his superiors that he could reach the Saar in three days and then 'easily breach the West Wall.' Patton's attack began on November 8, but confronted with pouring rain, mud, and mine-fields he advanced only fifteen miles in eight days before the elastic tactics of General Hermann Balck and the stubborn defence of the city of Metz finally halted him.

Hitler had not lost his nerve. In his secret order for the Ardennes attack signed on November 10 he expressly accepted all the risks 'even if the enemy offensive on either side of Metz, and the imminent attack on the Ruhr region, should create major inroads into our territory or fortifications.' It was a calculated risk, but one largely justified by events.

His throat had now been X-rayed, and on the eighteenth it was again examined at Karlshof hospital (near Rastenburg) by Eicken, Morell, Stumpfegger, and Dr. Brandt; a laryngeal polyp had been found on his left vocal cord. It was not a malignant tumour, but Eicken would have to operate on Hitler's throat in Berlin at once.

The Führer's departure from East Prussia was kept secret. At 3:15 p.m. on November 20, while the noise and clatter of the construction gangs working on the last bunkers still continued, Hitler left the Wolf's Lair for Görlitz station and boarded his train. An SS orderly listed those at dinner as Bormann, Morell, the dietician Fräulein Constanze Marzialy, Schaub, the impresario Benno von Arent, and two secretaries. One of the latter wrote evocatively of the journey:

> I had come to love the forest life and East Prussia's landscape. Now we were leaving them forever. Hitler probably knew that too. Although he had ordered the construction work continued, as though he intended to return one day, he too was in a farewell mood. Had he not always maintained that so long as he personally commanded any sector it had never been abandoned?
>
> His carriage windows were blacked out. He sat in his compartment with the light switched on . . . a twilight like a museum.
>
> I had never seen Hitler as dejected and distant as on this day.
>
> His voice barely rose above a whisper. His eyes were rooted to a spot on the white tablecloth. An oppressive atmosphere crowded in on the narrow, swaying cage around us.

> Hitler suddenly began to talk about an operation and about his confidence in Professor von Eicken's skill. 'It's a great responsibility for him but he's the only one who can do it. An operation on the vocal cords isn't dangerous, but it may leave me with no voice. . .'

At 5:30 A.M., the train arrived at Berlin's Grunewald station. With the car's headlights picking out only ruins to the right and left, Hitler was driven back to his chancellery.

HIS SOJOURN here lasted three weeks. Miss Eva Braun joined him, and lunched and dined with him almost every day. Professor von Eicken operated on him on November 22; the pathologist confirmed that the polyp was benign, of the kind more commonly referred to as a 'singer's knot.' The morphine injection Eicken used to anaesthetise the Führer proved an alarming overdose, however, for he was knocked out by it for nearly eight hours; the professor had failed to take into account Hitler's total abstinence from alcohol and nicotine in calculating the dose. Gradually Hitler's voice returned, although by early December he could still only whisper; soon the entire chancellery was talking in whispers too. He remained out of sight, kept company only by Eva and the three older secretaries; an adjutant brought him the war reports. When Albert Speer came for a conference on November 28, it was obvious Hitler was getting better.

Goebbels too was inspired by their chief's recovery. After spending hours with him, until 5:30 A.M. on the first day of December, listening to his secret plans for the coming Ardennes offensive, he wrote: 'When I consider how sickly and weak he was when I saw him bed-ridden several weeks go, when he already outlined these same great plans to me . . . then I can only say that a miracle has come over him.' Hitler told him that if the offensive succeeded they could 'Dunkirk' the British army for a second time, and restart the currently stalled V-1 bombardment of southern England.

Two days later Hitler visited the Goebbels family at their lakeside home for the last time: noticing that Goebbels had brought their priceless paintings out of bunker storage for the occasion, he talked of the devastation and loss of life in Berlin. Then he laughed out loud, referring to the prophecies that the British were uttering about the rapid approach of victory.

Things were looking up, he commented; and Goebbels, aware of the coming Ardennes offensive, noted in his diary: 'I of course understand precisely what he's getting at.'

At five P.M. on December 10, Hitler left Berlin bound for the western front. He noticed that his urine was as brown as beer, so there were still traces of jaundice left. He sent for Morell at seven P.M. because of a few residual stomach cramps. The physician gave him a Spasmopurin suppository. In darkness eight hours later Hitler left his train and was driven by car on to the Eagle's Nest, the bunker headquarters built in 1940 at Bad Nauheim near the western front. They were eight hundred feet above sea level here, as Morell was pleased to note – 'like Linz.' He observed that Hitler's skin was still yellowish in hue. '[At 5:40 P.M.] Führer had a conference lasting several hours with around forty or fifty generals. They say he was very alert and lively, inspiring and compelling.' Hitler was tired but contented: the British and Americans had still not detected what he was up to.

His voice was still not strong enough to command a larger audience than these generals on the twelfth, but these were the generals whose divisions would launch the great attack on the sixteenth. A shorthand record exists of his speech. He suggested that evil forces had blocked Germany's unification ever since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. Peoples suffered the hardships of war bravely, but only so long as victory was still possible.

If that hope was now suddenly removed from the enemy, their people must turn against the war. 'Whatever they do, they cannot expect me to surrender. Never, never!' Frederick the Great had fought on, in the Seven Years' War, although all his generals and even his own brother had lost hope: 'His state presidents, his ministers, turned up from Berlin in droves to beg him to stop the war because it could no longer be won. But the tenacity of that one man made it possible to fight on until finally the tide miraculously turned. To suggest that if the throne hadn't changed hands in Russia the tide would not have changed, is quite beside the point; because if they had stopped the war in the *fifth* year a throne change in the seventh year would have been neither here nor there. That is the moment we have to wait for!'

Never in history, he said, had heterogeneous coalitions such as existed between East and West in 1944 survived for long. The enemy powers were already at each other's throats. 'If you sit at the centre of the web, like a spider, and follow this trend, you can see how from hour to hour the contrasts between them grow. If we throw in a few really powerful punches, we may at any moment see this entire artificially erected common front suddenly collapse with a mighty clap of thunder.'

The Ardennes offensive began at 5:30 A.M. on December 16, 1944.

The weather was perfect for the attack.

Part viii: Endkampf

RIENZI: *Verflucht, vertilgt sei diese Stadt!*
Vermodre und verdorre, Rom!
So will es dein entartet Volk!

VOLK: *Bald faßt ihn schon der Feuerbrand;*
er ist verflucht, er ist gebannt!
Verderben treffe ihn und Tod!
Auf, ehrt der Kirche Hochgebot!

RICHARD WAGNER'S OPERA *Rienzi*

The Gamble

It was a calculated risk that Hitler was taking, but he and his military advisers recognised that they had no choice. He insisted that now his one aim was to fight the war through to a victorious conclusion that would make fresh passages of arms impossible in Europe for at least a century. 'Frederick II earned his title "the Great" not because he was victorious, but because he did not despair in adversity; equally, posterity will come to recognise me because I too shall never have surrendered after grievous misfortunes.' In the same heroic vein Hitler had commenced an order to his commanders on November 25, 1944, as follows: 'This war will determine the survival or extinction of the German people. It demands the unqualified commitment of every individual. Even seemingly hopeless situations have been mastered by the blind courage and bravery of the troops, the stubborn steadfastness of all ranks, and by calm, unyielding leadership.'

The enemy had made their purposes quite plain: the Americans planned to convert Germany into 'a country primarily agricultural and pastoral in its character'; the plan to that end drafted by Henry Morgenthau, U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, had been initialled by Churchill and Roosevelt at Quebec in mid-September – a gift to Goebbels's antisemitic propaganda. The Nazi leaders could now proclaim that the enemy leaders were agreed on the extermination of forty million Germans.

The resumption of the saturation bombing and firestorm raids seemingly added authority to the claim. Over 2,200 tons of fire bombs were dropped by night on ancient Heilbronn, massacring 7,147 civilians within ten minutes. On December 15 Churchill announced in Parliament his approval of Stalin's demands on eastern Poland; the Poles could in return have much of eastern Germany, from which the Germans would be expelled – 'Because expulsion is the most satisfactory and lasting means.'

'Earlier,' Hitler reminded his generals, 'that kind of thing would have been dismissed as a propaganda slogan, as a propaganda lie.' Russian deserters had reported that Stalin had recently ordered that in German territory the Red Army troops might loot and rob and 'do as they please.' To surrender on terms like these would be a betrayal of the three million Germans who had now been lost in battle or enemy air raids.

Hitler also saw sound political and strategic reasons for launching his big winter offensive. The British and Americans were experiencing supply problems; their armies were thinly spread along the western front; they were low in fuel and ammunition, and manpower. 'Our position is no different from that of the Russians in 1941–42,' Hitler comforted his generals. 'They too were in the most straitened circumstances, but then they began to launch isolated offensives along our long battlefront – on which we ourselves were on the defensive – and slowly manoeuvred us back again.'

Once the German public saw this process start there would be a great sigh of relief, and the young would volunteer enthusiastically for battle. 'And this I must say – our nation is as decent as one could ask for. It would be impossible to find a better people than the Germans.' The Americans had left only four or five divisions to hold a one-hundred-mile Ardennes front; they were such a potpourri of inferior races that a bloodbath here would cause a political upheaval across the Atlantic. What Stalin had done to the Italians at Stalingrad, Hitler would do to the Americans here. 'If we succeed,' he had explained on December 2 to generals Hasso von Manteuffel and Sepp Dietrich, the two panzer army commanders involved, 'we shall have knocked out half the enemy front. Then let's see what happens!'

THIS MEANT taking a further gamble within the main one. Hitler knew that Stalin would not forever postpone the big offensive. Guderian believed the Soviet army would attack in mid-December when the first frosts hardened the ground. Russian prisoners gave 'December 20' as the date. Had the Ardennes offensive begun in mid-November as originally planned, the risk would have been less; but it had already been delayed nearly a month by logistics problems, and now it was due to begin on December 16. Against the opinion of all his generals, Hitler was however convinced that Stalin would wait until Germany and the Allies had exhausted their reserves in the west, just as he had waited, in vain, in 1940.

Hitler's conviction proved correct, and he would also win his second extraordinary gamble – on concealing his Ardennes intentions for three

months from the enemy. The renegades who had betrayed his moves in the past were now dead or awaiting trial; he had obliged every man participating in the war conferences preceding the Ardennes offensive to sign a document swearing him to utter secrecy. Moreover, he had ordered absolute radio silence; no orders were to be conveyed by plane or transmitted even in code by radio – a fatal setback for the Allies' complacent Intelligence; potentially unreliable troops, like those born in the Alsace, were to be withdrawn from the front line.

Hitler's security measures would prove almost perfect. He would conclude that the Allied generals, Eisenhower and Montgomery, had been living in their own dream world of future campaigns. 'Perhaps,' he was to say, 'there was also the belief that I might already be dead, or at least suffering from cancer somewhere. . .' With his predilection for the unorthodox, he had sent for SS Colonel Otto Skorzeny on October 21, told him that the Americans had put three captured German tanks flying German colours to devastating use at Aachen, and directed him to create a phoney 'American' task force to seize bridges across the Meuse between Liège and Namur and to spread alarm behind the enemy lines when the Ardennes attack began.

At a tightly restricted late October conference, he had revealed his plan to the chiefs of staff of Rundstedt and Model (generals Westphal and Krebs); he informed them that the strategic object would be to destroy enemy forces, not capture territory as such. Model and his generals were urging that the knife be plunged in only as far as the Meuse, to excise merely the American forces massing for the attack on the Ruhr. Hitler wanted the knife forced right through to the coast at Antwerp to trap the British armies in the Netherlands. Göring had promised two thousand planes for the attack. Model and Rundstedt accepted this, but warned that they lacked the strength to reach Antwerp. They favoured the more limited solution – turning at the Meuse instead. Throughout November the controversy raged until Hitler, on the twenty-fifth, insisted that the decision to go for the 'big solution' was final. The small solution might prolong the war; the big one might end it.

Hitler jealously watched over every detail, from the infantrymen's winter boots and blankets to the deployment of the formidable Jagd-Tiger tanks with their 128-millimetre guns. He remorselessly herded artillery units into the western front. Special tanks were built to spread sand on the icy mountain roads. Grimly certain of victory, he drafted orders to ensure that this next time no German soldiers set foot inside Paris – the germ centre of the recent Wehrmacht defeat. A special SS squad was detailed to round up

and execute civic and Party officials in towns and villages that had surrendered too readily to the enemy. Hitler dictated orders for the initial artillery bombardment to concentrate on the enemy-occupied villages and headquarters, followed by the saturation of the enemy artillery positions. During lulls in this bombardment, troops were to simulate infantry assaults ('Shouts of "Hurrah," and machine-gun bursts') to get on the American defenders' nerves. Hitler had learned one vital lesson from the Russian June 1944 offensive against Army Group Centre: to conserve his tank strength, the initial breach in the enemy line would be made by the *infantry* with assault-gun support. The panzer divisions would not follow until the following night. On November 26, Hitler set December 10 as the first possible date.

TWICE MORE the attack was postponed, while the last supplies arrived. The requested stockpile of 3·8 million gallons of gasoline had been built up, and more than the fifty trainloads of ammunition. Morale was high. Some 170 bombers, 90 ground-attack planes, and nearly 1,500 fighter aircraft were standing by. Twenty-eight German divisions were about to fall upon only five American divisions. 'One P.M.,' wrote Morell on December 14, 1944. 'The Führer has slept well and is looking good. I went for over an hour's walk with [him] in the tempting woods and valleys along with his adjutant [Albert] Bormann and Dr. Stumpfegger. The Führer got his Alsatian, Blondi, to carry a wooden exercise block. No treatment!' It was the same the next day: 'Führer in excellent health, constant good appetite. No treatment.'

It was the eve of the historic offensive. At three P.M. Hitler held a final conference with Himmler and Westphal. The meteorological experts forecast several days of poor weather, which would ground the enemy air force. Hitler telegraphed once more to Model forbidding him to turn the knife before crossing the Meuse. He assured him, 'If you comply with all these basic operational guidelines, a great victory is certain.' He dined with his secretaries, and retired to bed at five – half an hour before the artillery barrage began – satisfied that no ugly surprises were in store.

By the time he was awakened at 11:30 A.M. on December 16, the American front had been engulfed at many places along a seventy-mile sector between Monschau and Echternach, and his infantry was already eight and ten miles inside enemy territory. Morell came at midday: 'He is very alert and lively,' he noted, 'but got no sleep because of the coming offensive.'

Morell observed a tremor in the left hand and put it down to Hitler's great excitement over the battle; he gave injections of his own patent glu-

cose, vitamin, and liver extract products, 'on account of the coming mental strain.'

The atmosphere here at the Eagle's Nest was electric. Karl Thöt wrote in his diary: 'When [fellow-stenographer Ewald] Reynitz and I went over at three P.M. for the war conference, an imposing number of German fighter planes swept low overhead, and Major Büchs [a Luftwaffe adjutant] . . . said challengingly, "Who dares say anything against the Luftwaffe now!" . . . When we reached the conference room the Führer was already there, contrary to his custom. It was only too evident how delighted he was at the first magnificent news of our offensive. Even before the conference the Reich press chief, Dr. Dietrich, told us: "Well – at last you're going to get something cheerful to take down!"' To Hitler the battle was already as good as won. That day he ordered the German navy to do everything possible to prevent British ships escaping from Antwerp before – and after – Sepp Dietrich's SS Sixth Panzer Army got there.

IT WILL serve no purpose to pursue here the next month's events on the Ardennes battlefields. It is more interesting to see how those at the Eagle's Nest, inspired by Hitler's hardy optimism, persistently failed to grasp the harsh realities of the campaign.

His tanks never recaptured Antwerp; they never even crossed the Meuse. What caused this defeat? Some factors came as a shock to Hitler: the Americans fought with unexampled bravery; their new anti-tank shells, fitted with proximity fuses, wrought havoc on the attackers. The German tanks ran out of gasoline as they churned in low gear through the narrow, twisting valleys and defiles. The fuel shortage was aggravated by the over-motorisation of the attacking divisions. Convoys of empty trucks were following, ready to be stuffed with booty. Tank trucks could not get through, as jams built up in the roads leading to the battlefields. Finally, although General von Manteuffel's Fifth Panzer Army broke through first, Hitler continued to attach the Schwerpunkt to Sepp Dietrich, probably for political reasons.

'The offensive,' wrote Dr. Morell on its second day, 'is making slow but sure headway. No treatment!' Within five days Hitler's troops had taken 25,000 American prisoners and destroyed 350 enemy tanks. The Allied air force was still grounded by bad weather – and Stalin was still not moving. Phoning Magda Goebbels on her thirteenth wedding anniversary, and then speaking with her husband at one A.M. on December 19, Hitler proclaimed that the U.S. First Army confronting them was already beaten: Goebbels

rejoiced to him that General Eisenhower appeared not to have grasped what was happening – he was still talking of a localised Nazi push, by three or even four divisions. By the twenty-second, Eisenhower had had to call off his attacks along the entire western front, and he even relinquished hard-won bridgeheads along the Saar. Sixteen to twenty Allied divisions were estimated to be bearing down on the Ardennes battlefield, but Hitler's offensive had not been checked, and the weather was still against the Allies.

Hitler chuckled: 'Mr. Churchill, now *you* must make a *Ganzer Entschluss!*' – and he mimicked the Briton's speech impediment as he did so.

WITH AN offensive against East Prussia and Silesia now, Stalin could have immediately disembarrassed his western Allies. He made no move. Indeed, reports reached Hitler of open warfare between the pro-Stalin elements in Greece and the British troops: after a luckless attempt to bring the warring factions to heel, Churchill flew out of Athens, 'with his tail between his legs,' as Hitler mocked. 'And he wants people to believe him capable of stopping the tide of Bolshevism into Europe as a whole!'

The Intelligence reaching Hitler was that Stalin had attached outrageous political demands to the unleashing of his big offensive. December 20, the date given by Russian prisoners for the Soviet offensive, passed. Slapping the map table at the Eagle's Nest, Hitler crowed: 'You see, perhaps we've made it after all!'

Hitler's knife had now plunged forty miles into the enemy front; but on the seventh day of the offensive, December 23, the skies cleared. The Allied air forces regained control; their bombers devastated the railroad stations in the German rear, at Koblenz, Gerolstein, and Bingen, and Allied fighter-bombers created havoc on the roads. Hitler stood outside his blockhouse impassively watching as two thousand enemy bombers swarmed eastward over his head, glittering solemnly in the weak winter sun.

They spelt the end of his hopes of an easy triumph in the west. Over lunch, his sharp-tongued secretary Christa Schroeder challenged him. 'Mein Führer, we *have* lost the war – haven't we?' He stonily replied that they had not.

He had begun rereading the collected letters of Frederick the Great. It was this statesman's obdurate tenacity that had alone assured victory. If Hitler's troops now asked him, Why all this sacrifice? he would answer, 'The war cannot last as long again as it has already lasted. Nobody could stand it, neither we nor the others. The question is, Which side will crack

first? And I say that the side that lasts longer will do so only if it stands to lose everything. *We* stand to lose everything. . . If America says, "Cut! Stop! No more American boys for Europe!" it won't hurt them. . . But if we say today, "We've had enough, we're packing up" – then Germany will cease to exist.' This was the logic into which the Allies' insistence on unconditional surrender had forced him.

Stalin did not share their compunctions. Hitler learned secretly that Stalin was willing to negotiate with him before beginning his new offensive. Hitler however was no more inclined to throw in the towel now than Stalin had been in 1941.

When Ribbentrop gamely offered to fly with his family to Moscow now, Hitler begged him: 'Ribbentrop, don't pull a Rudolf Hess on me!' Stalin's offer showed the Red Army was exhausted; and had not the General Staff proclaimed its confidence in the strength of the eastern front?

THE EASTERN front – and that included Hungary – was purely a 'General Staff' theatre. Without Hungary there would be neither aluminium to build aircraft nor aviation fuel to fly them. 'This is why Hungary is so vital,' agreed Guderian. It did not occur to either Hitler or the Hungarians to declare Budapest an 'open city': on December 4, Ferenc Szálasi sanctioned its house-by-house defence.

The Russian offensive here began on the twentieth. Friessner had packed 70,000 German and Hungarian troops into the city, but the Soviet thrust met little resistance and Hitler dismissed both Friessner and the Sixth Army's General Fretter Pico on December 23; by the twenty-fourth, Budapest was surrounded.

As Morell administered the usual injections the next day Hitler complained that the tremor in his right hand was now worse. ('Situation in Hungary!' was the doctor's diagnosis of the cause.) Guderian arrived on the twenty-sixth to ask for reinforcements for Hungary. Hitler agreed at once. An infantry division would be moved immediately from the western front to Budapest. Two more would follow to the main eastern front.

In particular, Guderian had sent out an order late on December 24 for the Fourth SS Panzer Corps, commanded by the redoubtable Herbert Gille, to entrain from Warsaw (Army Group A) to Hungary – where its two panzer divisions, 'Death's Head' followed by 'Viking,' would begin a counterattack on New Year's Day to relieve the besieged city of Budapest. As Guderian wrote on December 31 to his Hungarian counterpart: 'By

deliberately taking a very grave risk on the rest of the eastern front we have done everything possible to restore firm contact with Budapest.'*

Gille's relief attack at Budapest was not scheduled to jump off until New Year's Day. The wait preyed on Hitler's nerves; it tore at his gut. On December 30, Dr. Morell noted: 'For two days he has had a queasy stomach with gaseous build-up, he says from a green pea soup he had, but in my view it comes from nervousness over what lies ahead: composing a speech and delivering it, and secondly, evidently some major military event.' On January 1, Hitler also wanted to throw another punch at Eisenhower's armies to prove that he still held the initiative on the western front.

Overall, Hitler was still bullish about his Ardennes offensive. 'We have knocked out at least six or seven hundred enemy tanks,' he said. 'About six or seven divisions have presumably been completely destroyed.'

He began plotting with Rundstedt a series of rapid blows further south. The first would be 'North Wind' – an attack by eight divisions from the Saarbrücken region, designed to take from the rear the Americans advancing through northern Alsace. The second would be toward Metz, to restore Germany's iron-ore supplies. 'The purpose of all these attacks,' Hitler theatrically announced to his generals, 'will mainly be to eliminate the Americans south of our [Ardennes] entry point – to destroy them bit by bit, to eliminate [*ausrotten*] them division by division.'

If these body blows succeeded, then Manteuffel and Dietrich could resume their attack in the Ardennes. 'If not,' Rundstedt's war diary recognised, 'it will mean the end of our offensive operations and a transition to a defensive war of attrition. But no matter what, the important result remains that for the time being we have rid the Rhine and Palatinate of the threat of an enemy offensive.'

Crossing this last high plateau of his fortunes, Hitler still radiated determination, the nameless energy of a Messiah, to his visitors: Szálasi noticed it; Bormann cultivated it; Guderian succumbed to it. But he had aged: his

*There is no contemporary evidence to support Guderian's 1951 version, which has him at the Eagle's Nest on December 24, 1944, for the sole purpose of pleading with Hitler to transfer the defensive Schwerpunkt from west to east, and Hitler snubbing him: 'The eastern front must manage with what it's got.' Not until January 14 – two days *after* the Soviet invasion began – did Admiral Voss report from Hitler's conference that '[Guderian] has now asked the Führer to transfer the war's Schwerpunkt to the eastern front.'

back was bent, his spine had lost its symmetry; his face was haggard and his voice quavered; his hair was grey, and the famous moustache was snow-white. Admiral Heinz Assmann wrote: 'His handclasp was weak and soft, all his movements were those of a senile man; only his eyes retained their flickering gleam and penetrating look.' His 'midday' conference rarely began before five P.M.; after that his doctors ordered him to sleep three hours each day. He went for frequent strolls in the snow around his bunker. Wieland Wagner, the composer's grandson, found his manner 'even tamer and kindlier than before'; Blaskowitz, conferring with him about 'North Wind' on December 28, observed that his left shoulder drooped and his hand was shaking; Baron von Steengracht also noticed that he 'still put a brave face on, but he was frail and his hand trembled.' Indeed, Hitler could now hardly write; a trusted civil servant now had to forge his signature on citations and awards. His throat was well enough for him to pre-record that day his radio speech for New Year's Eve; but the speech lacked the wit and bite of his earlier annual addresses; the public missed any references to the new weapons or campaigns which might yet bring them the promised victory.

This was as well, for at the end of the plateau there was an abyss. In 1944 Allied heavy bombers had dropped a hundred times more bombs on Germany than Göring had on Britain in 1940. The Luftwaffe's aircraft were powerless against them. The 217 rocket-propelled Me-163 interceptor aircraft so far built and launched had claimed only five bombers; Hitler ordered Me-163 production cancelled, saying that anti-aircraft artillery alone could defend Germany now. At a meeting with Hitler on January 3, Speer blamed Göring and the Luftwaffe, but others blamed Speer himself.

The transport, munitions, and fuel crises were directly affecting Hitler's strategy. Coal was piling up in the Ruhr pit-heads, but the devastated railroads could not carry it to the factories. The loss of France, Lorraine, and Belgium had cut German steel output by the autumn from 3,100,000 to 2,000,000 tons a month. There were frustrating side effects on the new secret weapons upon which Hitler relied to turn the tide in the eleventh hour: prefabricated sections of the secret Mark XXI submarine could not be brought to the assembly points because of wrecked canals. In November only nine instead of 17 had been assembled, and in December only 18 instead of 28, because now air raids had stopped submarine-battery production too.

How right Hitler had been to press his 'lunatic' demand late in 1939 for keeping Germany's air frontiers as far apart as possible! 'Herr Beck and his

memoranda!' he scorned. 'Those gentlemen wanted to fight in the pre-airpower age!' On January 8 he again insisted on equipping the Me-262 jet aircraft with 500-kilo bombs to disrupt the enemy's railroads and dockyards behind the western front.

Hitler's counterattacks were also failing. 'North Wind' caused Eisenhower momentary alarm – he abandoned hard-won ground and even contemplated evacuating Strasbourg. But the enemy side-stepped fast enough to escape encirclement in Alsace. In Hungary, Gille's relief attack slowed to a halt six days later, still short of Budapest.

On January 3 Field Marshal Montgomery began his carefully planned offensive on the northern flank of the Ardennes bulge; Patton was still relentlessly attacking it from the south. Hitler – whose generals now claimed to have destroyed 1,230 Allied tanks in the battle and captured 400 guns – decided to cut his losses. At a conference with Hitler and Göring on the seventh, Rundstedt asked permission for Model to pull back the westernmost attack spearhead, the Forty-seventh Panzer Corps; Hitler agreed, and he decided that if he was not to lose the initiative entirely, he must also pull out Sepp Dietrich's SS Sixth Panzer Army to establish a tactical reserve while he could, for there was no knowing what the enemy might do with the divisions he could now release from the Ardennes battlefield. This order – Hitler's tacit admission that he had lost the Ardennes gamble – was issued from the Eagle's Nest at two A.M. on January 8, 1945.

SNOW DRIFTS blanketed Hitler's headquarters. It was only twenty degrees Fahrenheit. In Poland, the ground had frozen, but Stalin had still not begun his big push from the Vistula bridgeheads toward Berlin. When Guderian came on January 9, the Führer again speculated: 'If the Russians aren't attacking, then it's for political reasons.' Guderian seconded that: 'It's because of the British.' He now expressed alarm however about the eight-hundred-mile front between the Carpathian Mountains and the Baltic, where the Russians had built up an immense superiority in tanks, artillery, and troops.

Guderian had just visited General Joseph Harpe, commanding the army group astride Warsaw. He put forward Harpe's proposals for the army group to fall back on a 'given word' from the winding Vistula River line to a more economical one; this would create two strong groups of reserves for a counterattack after Stalin's big offensive began. Hitler rejected this outright.

His reasons are plain from the fragments of stenographic record. Firstly, it was too late to begin rethinking their strategy; secondly, he believed that

with nine panzer and three panzer-grenadier divisions sited north and south of Kraków, south-west of Warsaw, and in East Prussia, Guderian already held sufficient in reserve to stave off the threat; thirdly, he was inspired by the fortifications dug by the east Germans; and fourthly, as he admitted in private to his own adjutants the next day, 'I always shudder when I hear talk of "withdrawing here" in order to be able to "operate there"; I've been hearing that tune for two years now, and every time it's been a disaster.'

The German army already had 3,000 tanks and assault guns in the east; by Hitler's reckoning, Stalin would need a 3 to 1 superiority to begin an offensive: 'At any rate, they don't have nine thousand tanks.' The hordes of Soviet divisions listed by the General Staff reminded Hitler of 'Chinese divisions': each probably had only a few thousand men. When Guderian bewailed the crippling ammunition shortage Hitler lectured him: 'Now you see what nobody wanted to see at the time: the potential harm of our retreats in the east. From our factories down there' – pointing to the Donets Basin – 'we would probably already be supplying the eastern front with two or three million shells a month. But people told me, "What's the point, just for a few iron-ore mines!" And the line was shorter then than it is now.'

Hitler was still on the western front. On the evening of January 9 an army adjutant gave him the first documented hint that Stalin's attack was imminent. 'Over the last few days there have been continued heavy movements into the Baranov bridgehead. The impression there is that they are going to start soon after all.' Over the next two days the signs multiplied. Prisoners confirmed that the offensive would begin between the eleventh and sixteenth. The artillery was in place, and the infantry had taken up its assault positions: so Hitler learned on the eleventh. When he rose at noon Jodl's adjutant, Colonel Heinz Waizenegger, came almost at once to announce that after a further hour-long barrage Stalin's great offensive in the Baranov bridgehead had begun.

Two of Hitler's secretaries had just returned from leave, and they lunched with him. Traudl Junge had hitched a truck ride through Munich the morning after British bombers had blasted the city with two thousand tons of bombs. 'In a very few weeks this nightmare will suddenly stop,' Hitler pronounced. 'Our new jet aircraft are now in mass production. Soon the Allies will think twice about flying over Reich territory.'

One anecdote remained in Frau Junge's memory of that day. His dog Blondi urgently needed to go out, and sprang delightedly through the bun-

ker door with a manservant summoned for the purpose. 'Amazing what little things can please a dog,' she remarked. Hitler laughed: 'Not to mention us human beings! I was once on the road for hours with my men, and I had to go on to Magdeburg to open a stretch of autobahn. As my convoy of cars was spotted more and more cars fell in behind. Brückner and Schaub sat with masklike faces next to me. I had to keep standing, too, with a fixed grin. Then Brückner reminded us: "Mein Führer, I had your special train sent to Magdeburg station!" How glad we were to see that train!'

Julius Schaub cupped his hand over one ear and grunted. 'Mein Führer, do you remember the Hotel Elephant at Weimar!' 'And how!' said Hitler. 'My regular rooms had running water but no WC, so I had to walk down this long corridor and vanish into the little room at the end. It was sheer purgatory every time, because when I left my room word spread around the hotel like wildfire, and when I emerged from the closet they were all waiting to cheer me and I had to give the Hitler salute and a rather embarrassed smile all the way back to my room. Later on I had that hotel rebuilt.'

At Hitler's main war conference that day, January 12, the news was that Marshal Konev's forces had swept through the three German divisions containing the Baranov bridgehead. By next day they had advanced twenty miles. The German panzer divisions had been mauled. After a two-hour artillery barrage by 350 batteries a new deluge of tanks and infantry hit the eastern flank of East Prussia. On the fourteenth the two other Vistula bridgeheads also debouched into southern Poland south of Warsaw, and a second offensive began against East Prussia, on the southern flank. Although 245 enemy tanks had already been destroyed, by the fifteenth the whole eastern front was ablaze. Kielce in southern Poland fell. Warsaw was bypassed to the north and south. Hitler was aghast at the sudden collapse, given that his armies in Kurland and East Prussia had held off the enemy so well before.

On the fourteenth Guderian cabled a belated appeal for the war's Schwerpunkt to be moved to the eastern front. At a last conference with Rundstedt and Model on January 15 Hitler instructed them to hold off the Allies for as long as possible. At six P.M. he boarded his train. At 7:30 he called another war conference. At 7:35 Guderian telephoned, appealing now for 'everything to be thrown into the eastern front.' As the train gathered speed toward Berlin, one of his personal staff – the SS colonel Otto Günsche – remarked 'Berlin will be most practical as our headquarters: we'll soon be able to take the streetcar from the eastern to the western front!' Hitler laughed wanly at this witticism, whereupon the rest of his staff joined in.

Waiting for a Telegram

When he awoke at nine a.m. on January 16, 1945, his train was approaching the capital. Snowdrifts concealed Berlin's cruellest injuries. The Reich chancellery's old wing, scene of his pre-war political triumphs, had suffered unmistakably, and he could make out snow-filled craters in the gardens. A rectangular concrete slab elevated some feet above ground level marked the site of the deep shelter which Albert Speer had built for him. Hitler decided to sleep in his usual first-floor bedroom for the time being – a hurricane seemed to have blasted through it, but it had been repaired.

No stenograms of the next conferences survive, but they were clearly charged with high drama. General Harpe's Army Group A had collapsed; Hitler appointed Schörner his successor. He also instructed the navy to embark two panzer and two infantry divisions at the Kurland port of Libau immediately and to bring them by sea to reinforce the main eastern front.

Post-mortems were held into the catastrophe in Poland. Hitler learned that the Twenty-fourth Panzer Corps (General Nehring), stationed south-west of Kielce – much too close to the Russian Schwerpunkt – had received telephone orders from Harpe to hold Kielce as a 'hinge,' without counterattacking, although that was what panzer divisions were for. Now that the front line had been overrun so 'unexpectedly rapidly,' the corps was engulfed. Seething with anger, Hitler ordered Harpe to report to him in person. The general calmly produced a Führer Order explicitly reserving these divisions to Hitler's whim. Hitler had never seen the order before, and concluded that Guderian's staff was responsible.

The loss of Warsaw produced another example of the General Staff's waywardness. Hitler had ordered the Polish capital defended as a fortress.

When Guderian next appeared at the chancellery he told the startled Führer that the city had already fallen to the Russians. But even as they were conferring, a radio message arrived from the German battle commandant in Warsaw: he was still holding out, though enveloped on all sides. Hitler ordered the city held at all costs – like Budapest, which was still surviving the Soviet onslaught. However, it was now too late. Asked for an explanation, Guderian blamed his chief of operations, Colonel Bogislaw von Bonin, for the inaccurate report. Hitler ordered Bonin arrested, exclaiming: 'This General Staff clique has got to be stamped out!'

ONCE, HE had said that he would fight on until 'a peace that is honourable, acceptable to Germany, and will safeguard the life of her coming generations becomes possible.' Faced now with this Soviet invasion, Hitler sceptically authorised Ribbentrop's first cautious feelers to the western powers. These might yet drive a wedge into the enemy alliance: sources strongly suggested that it was falling apart. Both Roosevelt and Churchill refused to accept Stalin's 'Lublin Committee' puppet government and his proposed frontiers for Poland; after all, Britain had gone to war over Poland's integrity in 1939. 'There must be people in Britain who can see what it is they are demolishing!' Hitler exclaimed in exasperation to his adjutants.

With his Ardennes offensive still causing acute embarrassment to the Allies, Hitler had authorised Ribbentrop – probably on January 2 – to draw up proposals for the western governments. By the nineteenth, when Ribbentrop brought the document to him, the political climate seemed even more propitious; London and Washington could surely find little comfort in the Red Army's immense offensive.

The document proposed that Germany retain her national frontiers and renounce both her economic autarky and her ambitions to a hegemony over Europe; that freedom of religion would be restored, and the Jews resettled somewhere in an international community.

The proposal was stated to reflect the views of 'authoritative sources in Berlin including the foreign minister.' Hitler approved it. Ribbentrop signed it and sent Dr. Werner von Schmieden, who had a distinguished League of Nations record, to Switzerland to make contact with a Mr. Allen Dulles and an equivalent British official. Now they could only wait for a reply.

Meanwhile, Hitler confidently prepared fresh military undertakings in the east. His milieu changed. Martin Bormann – who returned from a two-week leave on January 19 bringing Eva Braun to Berlin with him – held

regular morning conferences with Hitler. Goebbels and Ley were frequent guests. Dönitz attended almost daily – for his warships were to evacuate hundreds of thousands of civilians from the threatened eastern provinces. On January 20 the admiral offered Hitler twenty thousand naval troops for the land battles.

That same day Hitler conferred with Speer and Saur on ways of regaining air supremacy; Göring, Messerschmitt, and other experts crowded his study. He ordered – once again – the heaviest cannon and air-to-air missiles like the R4M rocket to be mass-produced for the fighter squadrons. Jet-fighter development was to continue at top priority.

This long-term planning showed that Hitler still expected a Seven Years' War. By weakening the western front he hoped to raise an army of assault in the east before the end of February 1945; this would head off the Russian invasion. Meanwhile the western enemy would be harried by more aggressive warfare from Hitler's Atlantic 'fortresses' – Lorient, Saint-Nazaire, La Rochelle, and North Gironde – and their long lines of communication would be disrupted by U-boat, minelaying and midget-submarine operations, and Luftwaffe attacks. On January 19, Dönitz endorsed Hitler's delaying strategy. One hundred and seven of the secret Mark XXI U-boats were already fitting out, and the first were to begin operations in March.

Late on January 19 Hitler began to consider transferring the Sixth SS Panzer Army to the east. But events were rapidly overtaking his decisions, and he knew that weeks would pass before the panzer army could complete its transfer. Martin Bormann wrote in his diary: 'Midday: situation in the east growing increasingly menacing. Evacuation of the Warthegau. Tank spearheads approaching Kattowitz, etcetera.'

Hitler concluded that the *strategic* danger to the Reich lay in Hungary and Austria, where Stalin was preparing, with an army of inferior troops, to capture the last remaining petroleum fields south of Lake Balaton and in the Viennese region. On January 20, Hitler confided to press chief Otto Dietrich: 'I'm going to attack the Russians where they least expect it. The Sixth SS Panzer Army's off to Budapest! If we start an offensive in Hungary, the Russians will have to go too.'

His plan was for a rapid pincer attack, launched from both ends of the fifty-mile-long Lake Balaton to unhinge the southern end of the Russian front. On January 21 he cabled Weichs, the Commander in Chief Southeast, to investigate the feasibility of a simultaneous thrust by three or four divisions from Croatia across the Drava into southern Hungary; Weichs

replied the next day in terms of conditional approval. When Guderian, exhausted by poor health, protested that he needed the Sixth Panzer Army to defend Berlin, Hitler caustically replied, 'You intend operating without gasoline. Fine! How far do you think your tanks will get!' His orders stood.

In Poland, Kraków and Lodz were overrun. The clock was being remorselessly turned back. To release a corps for East Prussia, Hitler ordered Memel abandoned and its dockyard destroyed; on January 21 he authorised General Hossbach's badly mauled Fourth Army to fall back on the line of lakes on either side of the well-provided fortress town of Lötzen. That day, Hitler announced that the Reichsführer SS, Himmler, would take over command of a new Army Group Vistula whose mission would be to prevent the enemy from breaking through to Danzig and Posen and isolating East Prussia; Himmler was also to 'organise the national defence on German soil behind the entire eastern front.' He hoped for a ruthlessness and tenacity from the Reichsführer that was lacking in the elderly, worn-out army generals.

Two days later the Russians reached the coast at Elbing, cutting off East Prussia. On the twenty-fourth Hossbach withdrew the Fourth Army to the west and abandoned Lötzen without permission or a fight. Confronted with this *fait accompli* Hitler exploded: 'Hossbach and the Russians are hand in glove!' He dismissed the general and his entire staff immediately. To Jodl, Hitler compared this 'treachery' with the 'Avranches affair' which had begun the fall of France. He invited Goebbels round on the twenty-fourth. From now on the propaganda minister, brave and true, was a regular evening visitor; his diaries had however only one reverse after another to record.

Russian tanks were now rolling into Upper Silesia – the industrial province to which Hitler had evacuated his most precious war factories. Auschwitz and its essential rubber factory were overrun. The conference record shows that Hitler, told of the loss of Auschwitz, merely registered the fact. Posen was encircled and on January 27 the long, hard fight for possession of the city began; it would end only one month later with the death of its commandant and surrender to the Russians after they had threatened to massacre the injured Germans in their hands.

Millions of Germans began fleeing westward. Every road to Berlin, Dresden, and the west was choked with fleeing refugees. The navy would evacuate 450,000 from the port of Pillau over the next weeks; 900,000 more set out on foot despite sub-zero temperatures, along the forty-mile causeway to Danzig or across the frozen lagoon known as the Frisches Haff. Behind them the invading Russians – incited by Stalin and by an order signed by

Marshal Zhukov himself* – raped, pillaged, burned, and plundered. Gehlen's Intelligence branch confirmed: 'Refugee columns overtaken by Soviet tanks are often machine-gunned and then crushed beneath them.' After spending an hour with Hitler on the twenty-eighth Goebbels thoughtfully dictated, 'If the Führer should succeed in turning back the tide of events – and I am firmly convinced that the chance will one day come for that – then he will be not the man of the century, but the man of the millennium.'

All Germany listened on January 30 to Hitler's radio broadcast, the last he would ever make – it was all over in just sixteen minutes. His private adjutant, Alwin-Broder Albrecht, wrote the next day: 'From all sides the response to the Führer's speech has been indescribably positive, however gloomy the omens may be. . . What moved me most deeply was one telegram that arrived today from a refugee column trekking from the east. It just read: "Führer, we trust in you!" – signed, "A column passing through so-and-so."' Hitler ordered Berlin's buses to rush loaves of bread to the refugee columns heading for the capital.

EVER WESTWARD and northward the Russians swept, across frozen rivers and frosted fields. On January 27 Schörner had to order the Upper Silesian industrial region abandoned. Two days later Königsberg was isolated, and on the thirtieth the Russians reached and bridged the Oder only fifty miles from the centre of Berlin. Hitler instructed Guderian: 'Over the next few days I must be told everything that is known about the enemy's movements and the most likely directions of attack and assembly areas, because our own countermeasures will depend on them.' 'Jawohl,' answered Guderian.

One belief consoled Hitler: the consternation that this Soviet avalanche must be causing in London and Washington. He instructed Ribbentrop to feed to the British Intelligence networks a phoney report that Stalin was raising an army of two hundred thousand German Communists; under General Paulus and other captured German officers, this 'army' was to march westward and set up a puppet government, for example in Königsberg.

* Zhukov's lengthy Order of the Day fell into German hands. It was headed, 'Death to the Germans!' and announced in uncompromising terms that the hour had come for the Red Army to wreak revenge on 'Hitler's cannibals.' 'We'll take revenge for all those burned to death in the Devil's furnaces, poisoned in the gas chambers, shot and martyred. We'll take cruel revenge for them all. . . Woe betide the land of murderers! . . . This time we shall destroy the German breed once and for all.'

'That'll shake them – like being jabbed with a cobbler's awl!' In a further recorded dialogue with Jodl and Göring on January 27 Hitler mused, 'I don't know – do you think the British can still be watching this entire Russian development with a thrill of excitement?' 'No, definitely not,' replied Jodl. 'Their plans were quite different.' 'They certainly never bargained,' seconded Göring, 'for us standing firm in the west and letting the Russians conquer all Germany meanwhile. If it goes on like this we'll be getting a telegram in a few days' time. . . They went to war to stop us moving east – not to have the east coming right up to the Atlantic!'

It was in this mood of *Schadenfreude* that Hitler conducted two lengthy conferences with Ribbentrop early in February, and then on the seventh with SS General Karl Wolff – now chief police representative in occupied Italy – as well. Wolff described the western Allies' 'increasingly concrete peace feelers extended via Switzerland.' Hitler took note of his remarks, and, thus encouraged, Wolff began secret talks with the same Mr. Dulles whom Herr von Schmieden had been sent to contact in Switzerland.

AT THE Reich chancellery the broadcast of Hitler's January 30 speech was followed by the premiere of Dr. Goebbels's most ambitious colour movie ever, *Kolberg:* the story of one of the most stirring battles in the Napoleonic wars. Hitler never saw it, but the film was dispatched by fighter aircraft to inspire the German garrisons of the remaining Atlantic fortresses. 'These times call for the lionhearted,' wrote one of his adjutants after seeing *Kolberg*, 'so it is salutary to be reminded of what previous generations suffered in the fight for our nation's survival. . . The film matches present history so well that its originators – and work began on the film in 1942 – must have had clairvoyant powers.'

Two weeks had passed since the Soviet invasion began. Schörner's army group had now claimed 1,356 enemy tanks destroyed, and the army group in East Prussia a similar number. The fortress city of Posen – where German-speaking officer-traitors had infiltrated the lines – was still holding out; but the strongholds Chelmno, Thorn, and Marienwerder had to be relinquished by Himmler's makeshift army group; Hitler authorised these painful retreats. On January 30 – 31 it was 5:30 A.M. before he retired, to be awakened at noon by Bormann with the alarming news that Russian tanks had just crossed the frozen Oder River between Küstrin and Wriezen.

The Oder was the last major river before Berlin. Its western banks were defended only by the Volkssturm battalions. While these elderly soldiers

slowed down the Russian onslaught, Hitler directed that over three hundred heavy anti-aircraft batteries, including the entire anti-aircraft artillery of cities like Dresden, be transferred to the Oder line's anti-tank defence. All fighter planes were committed to the Silesian and East Prussian battlefields, because most could now carry bombs – as Hitler had always demanded. Thus the crisis was overcome.

In weakening the Reich's air defences Hitler perhaps hoped the Allied bombers might be called off – just as those still German-occupied islands in the Aegæan were very obviously being left unmolested by the British. ('So that the British do not need to defend them against the Russians or any other usurpers,' the German naval staff observed.) The German commandant of the eastern Aegæan had even received a secret British offer to carry supplies to the German-held islands on British steamships. In Breslau, 38 Volkssturm battalions had been raised; with these 15,000 men and 30,000 regular troops, Breslau defied air and artillery bombardment and ground attack in a long siege that was not ended until a week after Hitler himself had perished. Hitler knew, however, what the loss of the Silesian coal would mean, now that the Ruhr was virtually isolated by the rail and canal destruction. Germany's economic collapse seemed inevitable. Japan was in a similar plight, without rice, oil, bauxite, and iron ore; Hitler's attaché in Tokyo warned that Japan too could not fight on longer than another year.

The oil crisis had already forced on Hitler a strategic choice between East and West anyway. In January his battered refineries had produced only 50,000 tons of gasoline and 12,000 tons of aviation fuel. It was unlikely that the new U-boats and jet aircraft – 145 Me-262 jets had been produced during January alone – would get the oil they needed. At the end of January Hitler ruled that in the future the western front must go short of fuel and ammunition to aid the eastern front: Rundstedt had to forfeit fuel to replenish the Sixth SS Panzer Army before its departure for Hungary, although at any moment Eisenhower might begin his new offensive toward the Ruhr.

The American air force now joined in the British saturation bombing campaign. With the fighter squadrons still committed to the Oder battlefront, the big cities were defenceless. To exploit the refugee chaos in Berlin the Americans sent 1,003 heavy bombers at noon on February 3, 1945; these unloaded 2,200 tons of bombs into the heart of the capital, while not one aircraft climbed to the city's defence. The raid left the government quarter a shambles. Hitler took refuge in the new bunker. Bormann recorded: 'The Reich chancellery garden is an amazing sight – deep craters

and fallen trees, and the paths obliterated by rubble and débris. The Führer's residence was hit several times, and only fragments remain of the walls of the Winter Garden and Banqueting Hall.' Goebbels brought his family in to Schwanenwerder, where there were better shelters than out at Lanke. 'Papa and I,' wrote Magda Goebbels to her oldest son, now in British captivity, on the tenth, 'are full of confidence and we're doing our duty as best we can.'

Ribbentrop brought his young son down into the bunker as the fires still raged in Wilhelm Strasse. Rudolf had last seen Hitler in 1940 and was shaken to see the aged, bent man who greeted them near one of the fireproof doors. 'But the tide is turning,' he recalls Hitler as saying. 'Every day a new regiment is reaching the front – ' (*Regiment?* The young Waffen SS officer was uneasy at the word.) ' – And my young field marshals will bring the front lines to a standstill.' He named those whom he meant, and added: 'The most brilliant of all is Manstein, but even he can't halt a front line that's begun to collapse.' The all-clear sounded and life outside resumed. Hitler's adjutant Albrecht wrote two days later: 'Some twenty-five bombs fell on our district. There's no water, no heat, no electricity. . . By roundabout route water reached the main points again after twenty hours, but we'll have to wait another two weeks for heat – unless our visitors return in the meantime, for which possibility we are bracing ourselves.'

Mercifully, along the Oder the ice was now thawing, bringing a respite to the defenders. Hitler ordered ice-breakers and explosives used to speed up the process. By February 8 the immediate danger to Berlin had passed, but important Wehrmacht command posts were ordered to leave, and provision was made for the ministries to follow if need arose. Bormann began preparing an emergency headquarters for Hitler at Stolpe, in Mecklenburg.

The Luftwaffe was powerless. Every fresh disaster was now laid at Göring's door. A Soviet submarine sank the former cruise liner *Wilhelm Gustloff*, drowning over nine thousand souls, mostly refugees from East Prussia; the hospital ship *Steuben* was torpedoed some days later, drowning nearly all the twenty-five hundred casualties and one thousand refugees, a tenfold of the losses of *Titanic*. Dönitz blamed Göring, for failing to provide antisubmarine patrols. The anxious Reichsmarschall signed strings of belated death sentences on Luftwaffe officers for offences ranging from desertion, espionage, corruption, and loose living, to allowing aircraft, fuel, and bomb dumps to fall into enemy hands. For every sin that Göring punished, Bormann could always prove ten more against him. When Lammers venti-

lated the delicate matter of Hitler's successor, Bormann contemptuously advised that Göring was out of the running. Göring's very presence in the cramped air raid shelter revolted the Führer, since both the Reichsmarschall and his adjutant Dr. Ramon Ondarza made liberal use of conflicting colognes, with which the shelter's air purification system could not cope.

No word had yet come from the western powers – no 'telegram.' In Bulgaria, King Boris's successors had been shot by the new Communist regime. In Poland, Stalin's new puppet government proclaimed the forthcoming annexation of Silesia and East Prussia. On February 8 Marshal Konev attacked from the Steinau bridgehead across the Oder with the obvious aim of encircling Breslau, and a big Allied offensive developed between the Rhine and the Meuse. Far into the night Hitler sat talking with Bormann, the architects Speer and Giesler, and Eva Braun, who was returning to Munich the next day. Toward morning Hitler was informed that the British had destroyed the Pölitz synthetic refinery, the Luftwaffe's last gasoline source.

Yet he had still not lost hope. Late on February 9 Professor Giesler unveiled to him his model for the reconstruction of the city of Linz. Hitler had decreed that Linz must replace Budapest as the Danube's fairest city; it was to have a concert hall seating thirty-five thousand, and a bell tower five hundred feet high – with Hitler's parents entombed in a crypt at its base – on the north bank, and a major replanning of the old city on the south. A wide ceremonial mall was to extend from the railroad station to the city centre, flanked by opera houses, theatres, a museum, library, and immense art gallery. Now in Giesler's model it all took shape before Hitler's eyes.

At four a.m. that morning, February 10, he again stole into the shelter where the model was laid out, and he returned at three a.m. the morning after. When Kaltenbrunner came with reports of declining public morale, Hitler took the SS general, himself a native of Linz, into the model room. For many minutes Hitler described how Linz would arise anew when victory was theirs. As the ponderous, scarfaced general slowly warmed to the theme, Hitler challenged him: 'My dear Kaltenbrunner, do you imagine I could talk like this about my plans for the future if I did not believe deep down that we really are going to win this war in the end!'

The Russians had been held off about seventy miles from the Pomeranian coast by Himmler's army group, leaving an inviting three-hundred-mile flank for the Germans to attack. Since early February Guderian had been

planning to exploit this. But the rate of build-up for this counterattack was slow, and Himmler expressed a marked reluctance to risk his forces.

On February 10, Hitler called both Guderian and Himmler to the chancellery. Guderian pleaded for the attack to be brought forward – 'We can't wait until every last can of gasoline has arrived!' – and demanded a capable army general for Himmler's command staff. He suggested his own deputy, General Wenck. According to Guderian the argument lasted two and a half hours. Eventually he got his way, because Hitler smiled wearily and instructed Himmler: 'Wenck will be attached to your staff.' The attack would be brought forward to the fifteenth. In the event, the operation, from south of Stargard, was a failure. On the third day Wenck was injured in a motor accident. The attack lost all further impetus, and Hitler called it off.

Guderian's star began to wane. Learning that the general had recently advised Ribbentrop that the war was lost, Hitler made a terrible scene at the next war conference. 'In a situation like this,' said the Führer, 'any sign of defeatism is open treachery. That is just what General Guderian's recent discussion with Ribbentrop amounts to. . . It must be clear to everybody that if I throw an ordinary workman who mutters defeatist remarks in an air raid shelter into a concentration camp or hang him, I must expect at least as much from you. This kind of sedition has got to stop.'

From Yalta Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin announced on February 13 that Hitler's Reich was to be carved up between the victors into 'occupation zones.' The Yalta communiqué – sent in to Hitler page by page as it came over the teleprinters – elicited a hoot of triumph from him. 'So much for the drivel talked by our coffee-house diplomats and foreign ministry politicos! Here they have it in black and white: if we lose the war, Germany will cease to exist. What matters now is to keep our nerve and not give in.'

That evening Hitler again stole downstairs to view the models for the rebuilding of Linz. He dined at eight with two secretaries, then slept until it was time for the midnight war conference. Here the news was that since midday Breslau had been encircled and that three hundred British heavy bombers had just set the ancient heart of Dresden – alive with a million refugees – on fire. Before the conference was over, word arrived that a new British attack, twice as heavy as the first, had begun. The city had no shelters or flak guns, and no fighters were operating. From Dresden itself there was a merciful silence, as all the telephone lines were down. British codebreakers could hear Himmler radioing to his police chief, frankly incredu-

lous about the scale of the disaster: 'I have received your report,' lectured Himmler in this message. 'The attacks were obviously very severe, yet every first air raid always gives the impression that the town has been completely destroyed. Take all necessary steps at once.' It was 6:15 A.M. before Hitler retired. At one P.M. the next day, February 14, he was awakened with word that the American bomber forces were continuing the immolation of Dresden; the 'Florence on the Elbe' had vanished, and huge fires were raging.

After the all-clear sounded in Berlin, Hitler was surprised to meet in a chancellery hallway the army ENT-specialist who had treated his ear injuries after July 20; Dr. Giesing had been visiting an adjutant when the alert sounded. Twice the Führer absently asked where his family was; twice the doctor replied, 'They are in Krefeld, mein Führer.' Twice Hitler then asked Giesing which hospital he worked at, and twice the doctor told him. Then Hitler turned to the war. 'In no time at all,' he said, 'I'm going to start using my Victory weapon *(Siegwaffe)* and then the war will come to a glorious end. Some time ago we solved the problem of nuclear fission, and we have developed it so far that we can exploit the energy for armaments purposes *(Rüstungszwecke)*. They won't know what hit them! It's the weapon of the future. With it Germany's future is assured. It was Providence that allowed me to perceive this final path to victory.'* His gaze remained rooted to the floor. He again asked the doctor where his family lived. 'In Krefeld, mein Führer.'

The estimated night's death toll in Dresden was put to him as a horrifying one-quarter of a million. 'They flatten the Dresden opera house, and wipe out refugees,' he exclaimed, 'but Stettin harbour; jam-packed with troop transports, they leave alone!' At 7:15 P.M. on February 14 Hitler discussed Dresden for forty-five minutes with Goebbels. The minister insisted that Reichsmarschall Göring be brought before the People's Court; Hitler would not hear of it. He was the picture of dejection. 'Morale poor,' entered Professor Morell in his diary on the fifteenth, 'seems mistrustful,

* Giesing wrote this account on June 21, 1945 – six weeks before Hiroshima. The origin of Hitler's optimism is puzzling. Scientists under Professors Werner Heisenberg and Carl-Friedrich von Weizsäcker had been studying atomic bomb physics since 1939, and they had started building an experimental atomic pile at Haigerloch in 1944; in December the Reich chief of nuclear research, Professor Walther Gerlach, appealed to Bormann for exemption for them from Volkssturm service and speciously mentioned their 'atomic bomb' research as justification.

thanks to the situation on the eastern front and the air raids on Dresden.' Two days later the physician added, after seeing Hitler at two p.m., 'Says he has no complaints at all apart from the tremor which – as I observed last night at tea – is now badly affecting his left hand too. During our conversation he voiced a wish that I might sometime try a few shots of Strophantin (say, three) as these once worked for an entire year. . . These last four or five days [Hitler] has seemed extremely subdued, he looks tired and sleepless. . . The Führer will try to get by without sedatives.'

Goebbels proposed that Germany abandon the Geneva Convention and execute one Allied prisoner henceforth for every German civilian killed in air raids. Hitler liked the idea. 'This constant snivelling about humanity will cost us the war,' he complained. 'Neither the Russians in the east nor these hypocrites in the west stick to the Geneva Convention – just look at their attacks on the civilian population!' According to the staff stenographer present, Heinz Buchholz, Hitler emphasised that the Russians had demonstrated what could be achieved by ruthlessly punishing enemy airmen. 'Our airmen couldn't be persuaded to fly over Moscow or Leningrad for their lives, after the Russians began executing Luftwaffe airmen. They just published that "enemy parachutists" had been found and exterminated.'

The idea of repudiating the Geneva Convention did not however commend itself to the Party or the Wehrmacht. Keitel, Jodl, and Dönitz opposed it; Ribbentrop, summoned by his horrified liaison officer Walther Hewel, ultimately talked Hitler out of the idea during a forty-minute stroll with him in the blitzed chancellery gardens on February 21.

In stacks of five hundred at a time Dresden's air raid victims were publicly cremated on makeshift grids of steel girders. Hitler saw the pictures – the thousands of men and women and children, still in their Mardi Gras fancy dress costumes, being stacked like rotting cabbages onto the bonfires. Where was the justice in history if an enemy could vanquish Germany by means such as these? This was the mood that impelled him now.

A vivid description of Hitler in late February 1945 exists, rendered by one of the gauleiters summoned to the chancellery at two p.m. on February 24. On the previous day the Americans had unexpectedly begun their big offensive across the Roer River east of Aachen. On this February 24 the Red Army had just begun an unexpected attack on Himmler's thin line defending Pomerania. Only in Hungary had a modest success been achieved, with the destruction that day of a Russian bridgehead across the Gran River

after days of arduous fighting. When Hitler entered one of the few still undamaged chancellery halls, he found sixty or seventy of the gauleiters and officials lined up around three sides. He shook hands with each of them, then invited them to a simple luncheon – stew, followed by a cup of real coffee.

His subsequent oration gained in strength as the customary climax was reached. He talked of a forthcoming counterattack in the east, an operation which had been delayed by the losses of heavy weapons. He referred wistfully to the deceased General Hube and wished he had more generals 'carved of the same oak.' He asked for a supreme final effort from the Party so that the war might still be won – they must bring out a *furor teutonicus* in the people. If the people now gave up, they would deserve annihilation.

In conclusion, Hitler mentioned to the gauleiters his own declining health. Frederick the Great, he said, had also returned from his wars a broken man. At one stage Hitler tried to convey a glass of water to his mouth, but his hand trembled so much that he abandoned the attempt. Perhaps it was an act of showmanship, for he concluded with a smile: 'I used to have this tremor in my leg. Now it's in my arm. I can only hope it won't proceed to my head. But even if it does I can only say this: my heart will never quaver.'

six to eight thousand Russian tanks had been claimed destroyed since mid-January. Still the General Staff's belief was that the Red Army's next move would be the assault on Berlin. The very day of Hitler's speech proved these experts wrong. Instead of continuing westward, Marshal Zhukov turned north against Himmler's army group in Pomerania. On the twenty-seventh, he broke through Himmler's lines; two enemy tank armies which Gehlen had believed were preparing to exploit the Küstrin bridgehead now emerged far to the north-east, racing toward Köslin and the Baltic coast.

Hitler promised immediate reinforcements to Himmler for a counterattack, and he ordered the historic Danzig corridor held at all costs.

Meanwhile all manner of deception was to be used to persuade the Russians that between the Oder front and Berlin a deep and impregnable defence had been established. Unless Himmler's counterattack succeeded, the loss of East and West Prussia seemed inevitable.

Speaking with his Führer on the twenty-seventh, Goebbels suggested that they could have only one realistic aim now, namely to set an heroic example to their children's children, in case a similar misfortune should ever befall their country. It was not an inspiring argument, but Hitler agreed.

On March 3, 1945, he paid his last visit to the front line. He drove to First Corps headquarters in the bridgehead at Frankfurt-on-Oder to inspect for himself the unit strengths and their stocks of ammunition. 'The visit was primarily to the [new] divisions Döberitz and Berlin,' Goebbels dictated afterward. 'The effect on officers and other ranks was enormous.'

Refugees swirled past the Führer's car in anonymous multitudes; ten million were now fleeing the Russian tanks and guns. On the road back from the Oder River to his capital Hitler sat next to his chauffeur, Erich Kempka, lost in his own thoughts. Visiting him the next evening Dr. Goebbels hinted that he might drive out to the battlefields more often to put a stop to the 'wretched rumours' that he did not bother about his troops.

'In contrast to last time,' recorded Goebbels, 'I found him somewhat downcast, which is no surprise given the military turn of events. His health is also something of an impediment – the nervous tremor in his left hand has worsened badly, it was a shock to me.' He himself revealed that, come hell or high water, he intended to stay in Berlin with his wife and children. While Hitler was still by and large in good heart, his generals were not, and Goebbels was glad to leave the building. 'The atmosphere in the Reich chancellery is pretty grim,' he dictated next morning. 'I'd prefer not to go there again because you can't help being infected by the mood.'

Professor Morell had not accompanied Hitler to the front. The doctor was confined to bed with thrombophlebitis. Hitler called on him on March 4 and told him how glad he was that the doctor had not driven out with him. Still worried about Morell, he visited the doctor again the next day and pleaded with him, according to the latter's diary, never to accompany him to the front – 'because I [Morell] should then be exposed to serious injury from an accident or low flying planes, and if anything should happen to *me* he would be without a doctor again.' 'It is far more important,' said Hitler, 'to know that I shall always find you waiting for me when I get home.'

Germany's military reserves were long since exhausted. On February 27, Jodl showed Hitler a telegram from Rundstedt, forcefully complaining that of the 52,215 soldiers promised him in February only 11,802 had come. Desertions reached epidemic proportions. Bormann's staff proposed public hangings of cowards and deserters under the slogan that Gauleiter Karl Hanke had found effective in his fanatical defence of Breslau: 'Death and dishonour to those who fear an honourable death!' Hitler proposed to Himmler two radical solutions designed to shame the deserters back into

their units: to attain 'a suitable effect on the men's attitude' the Reich women's leader, Frau Gertrud Scholz-Klink, should be consulted on the creation of a women's battalion. Secondly, 6,000 youths of fifteen were to be recruited to reinforce Himmler's rear lines of defence. Bormann sombrely observed to his staff in a memorandum: 'This means that we are now calling up women and fifteen-year-olds to strengthen the front.'

TURKEY, EGYPT, Finland, and a host of South American countries now declared war on Germany.

In the west, on February 28 the Americans began advancing on the Rhine between Düsseldorf and Venlo; American tanks flying German colours tried to rush the Rhine bridges at Düsseldorf and Uerdingen, but these – and every other bridge from Duisburg down to Koblenz – were destroyed in the nick of time. The apathy of the people west of the Rhine shocked Hitler. White flags fluttered everywhere. Local farmers attacked German troops. At Trier the Volkssturm melted away; other Volkssturm units were reported throwing bazookas, machine guns, and ammunition into lakes and rivers. At Remagen, American troops entering the town were astonished to find the railway bridge across the Rhine still intact and flung an immediate armoured bridgehead onto the eastern shore. Most of Cologne was overrun.

By March 8 the situation in the east was also worse. Pomerania seemed lost, and with it Hitler's faith in Himmler. Pleading angina, the Reichsführer SS had abandoned his command staff for a health clinic at Hohenlychen; his staff described as 'utopian' Hitler's orders to seal the breach in Pomerania's defences. On March 4, General Hans Krebs – deputising for the injured Wenck – quoted to Hitler the blunt objections telephoned by General Kinzel, Himmler's operations officer: 'This war is being fought on paper, it's quite divorced from reality!' A year before Hitler would not have tolerated such criticism; but now he had to swallow it, because each military defeat eroded his authority.

He decided on a more limited eastward counterattack from Stettin instead. General Erhard Raus's Third Panzer Army would receive the necessary reinforcements by March 6. Shortly afterward his Third SS Panzer Corps (under General Martin Unrein's command) announced that it had enough ammunition for the first two days' attack. Hitler, cautious ever since Avranches, sent an SS adjutant to Stettin to check. This man, SS Major Johannes Göhler, reported back that the divisions had no ammunition at all. 'On the drive up to Stettin,' wrote Göhler privately, 'we passed endless

columns of refugees who had set out weeks ago. . . . Everybody from corps commander downward wanted to know about the Führer's health, about how things are on other sectors of the front, and more than anything about whether we can hope for further V-weapons.'

On the afternoon of March 8, General Raus came to the bunker to explain his army's defeat in Pomerania. He pointed out that his army's 8 divisions – with only seventy tanks between them – had held a line 150 miles long against 8 Soviet armies and 1,600 tanks. Hitler interrupted pedantically: 'Fourteen hundred!' The battle had been illuminated by many acts of bravery. Out of 34 Soviet tanks attacking the naval-held bridgehead at Divenow on March 7 only one escaped destruction; and this very morning the same naval troops had charged across open country and wiped out all 36 attacking tanks. In the battles 580 enemy tanks had been knocked out – 360 by bazooka. Hitler was unimpressed, and decided to dismiss Raus: 'He is too nondescript, bogged down in petty details.' Manteuffel would replace him. That day, March 8, 1945, Guderian predicted that since the Pomeranian threat to the Red Army's northern flank had now collapsed, Stalin's main attack on Berlin would begin 'in about one week.'

Göring came to venture the suggestion that it might be time now to 'clear the air politically.' Hitler snorted angrily that he would do better to clear the *air*, period. How high he set his chances now, we do not know. On March 13 he lightly assured Otto Meissner, now 65, that he was to stay on to enjoy Germany's peacetime reconstruction. 'I can't let you retire until you're seventy' – in 1950. Brooding over what might have been, he showed Goebbels the shorthand record of the conferences in which he had predicted that the Russian army would make for Pomerania before Berlin; the General Staff had insisted it knew better, and had now been proven wrong.

The two men walked grimly over to see firefighters damping down the ruins of the propaganda ministry further down the Wilhelm Strasse, wrecked by a British 4,000-pound blockbuster-bomb a few hours before.

Two nights later Hitler was inspiring Kesselring with promise of a great 'defensive victory' coming in the east, after which Germany's tank output would revert to the western front. He ordered a sudden northward thrust from the Ninth Army's narrow bridgehead at Frankfurt-on-Oder, to destroy Zhukov's forces massing at Küstrin and thus disrupt the big Soviet offensive. In conference with Himmler, Göring, and Guderian on March 15 Hitler instructed them to deceive the Russians into expecting the thrust to turn south. This was his new master plan, and it must not fail.

Hitler Goes to Ground

SCHOPENHAUER IDENTIFIED a certain rare character whom Fate has raised from total obscurity to eminence and who ever afterward believes that the same forces will never wholly desert him in his hour of misfortune – that no abyss is really bottomless, but that when he has plumbed its depths he will once again be lifted to the heights.

Such a man was Hitler. The 'race' between East and West to reach Berlin had convinced him that the two world hemispheres must within months be at war with each other, a war from which Germany would emerge as the *tertius gaudens*. Had his war lasted the full seven years, he might indeed have reaped the Cold War's rewards. Until the very last days of his life his Intelligence experts would nourish his beliefs with evidence of the coming conflict. A group of Soviet agents parachuted into Templin on the night of April 7–8, 1945, admitted under interrogation that their mission had been to find out what plans the Allies had made for attacking the Russians; if even Stalin expected such a clash, then Hitler intended to keep his Reich in existence – however battered and however diminished – until then.

SINCE LATE February 1945, Hitler and his staff had spent their nights in the Reich chancellery's bunker. The main shelter lay becalmed and impregnable – compared by Schaub to 'a U-boat prowling the depths below Berlin's sea of houses and ministry buildings.' Such was the scene of this final chapter of Hitler's life, with its narrow passageway, the constant hum of air-conditioning machinery, and the throng of military and Party officials clinging to Hitler and his infectious belief that this crisis would be overcome.*

* Thus Admiral Dönitz advised his commanders on March 3, 1945: 'Let us place our trust unconditionally in Adolf Hitler's leadership. Believe me, in my two years as Navy Commander in Chief I have found that his strategic views always turned out right.'

Right of the passageway after the machine room was Bormann's office with the main telephone switchboard and his teleprinters; the office was wallpapered with maps of Germany and Berlin, on which a five-man unit marked in blue chinagraph pencil the progress of each enemy bomber-stream.

Here Hitler spent the hours of the big alerts, watching with tired eyes the arrows approaching Berlin; the British bombers attacked from behind blinding 'screens' of radio-jamming while 'fast raiding forces' mounted diversionary attacks. Since the holocaust of Dresden, British night bomber forces had cascaded incendiaries and explosives into Chemnitz, Duisburg, Worms, Kassel, and ancient Würzburg. By day the tide was beginning to turn, as the Me-262 jets joined the squadrons. On a typical day the grim pages of the Luftwaffe High Command's war diary reported: 'Four Me-262s shot down four bombers.'

General Dietrich Peltz (Ninth Air Corps) and Colonel Hajo Herrmann (Ninth Fighter Division) had secured in February Göring's permission to prepare a mass attack by suicide pilots on American bomber formations. The kamikaze operation – overlooked by history – was vivid proof of the bitterness fomented by the bombing war. Koller made available 180 Me-109s on April 3; 184 pilots volunteered. The battle took place west of Hanover on April 7, 1945. Of the 'suicide' Me-109s, 133 were lost after destroying 23 American bombers; 77 pilots were killed; the jet fighters escorting these hopeless heroes claimed 28 more American bombers that day.

Left of the red-carpeted main passageway in Hitler's bunker were his private rooms: a bedroom with army bed, wardrobe, chest of drawers, and safe; and a low-ceilinged living room with desk, table, and hard sofa. A portrait of his idol, Frederick the Great, hung over the desk. Between the bedroom and passageway was the small conference room, filled with a map table surrounded by a wooden bench. Through the doors at the passageway's far end a spiral staircase led up into the chancellery gardens.

This bunker was connected to the Voss Bunker under the chancellery, which could house two thousand people. In 1939 Hitler had opened it to Berlin's hospital and welfare services, and many an 'Adolf' had cried its first cries of life here, the birth being marked by flowers for the mother and a bankbook with a hundred marks for the child. Every evening now a line formed in the street for access to the Voss Bunker. Hitler personally ordered a concrete rain-shelter built for those waiting, but weeks later his order had still not been carried out. 'I have to attend to every minor detail



The underground bunker beneath Hitler's Berlin Chancellery, based on a rendering by Hanno Ziegler and the original architectural drawings found in the files of Engineer-General Alfred Jacob, the army's expert on fortifications. The plans were compared with original post-war photographs taken in the bunker in July 1945 by U.S. Signal Corps officers (COURTESY *The Military Advisor)*

myself,' he remarked angrily to his secretaries. 'And yet there's nobody suitable as a successor.' Fräulein Schroeder, the sharpest of these ladies, pointed out: 'The name of Herr Himmler is often mentioned by the people.' 'The man's got no artistic sense at all!' retorted Hitler, to which Fräulein Schroeder tartly replied, 'In our present straits artistic sense hardly matters!'

Over one million people had been slain by the Allied bombers.

One day early in April 1945 Bormann read to Hitler an Allied newspaper report about German troops having saved an American bomber crew about to be lynched by angry townsfolk after a raid. Hitler was furious and looked around at General Koller, standing to the left of his chair. 'These are the men who are murdering German women and children! It's incredible!' He turned to Kaltenbrunner: 'I order that all bomber crews shot down these last few months or in the future are to be turned over to the SD at once and liquidated.' He buttonholed Koller a few minutes later and appealed to him. 'You must help me – we can't go on like this. What am I to do against this nightmare terror-bombing and the murder of our women and children?'

Koller urged patience. 'When our jet squadrons get stronger the war in the air over Germany will turn in our favour again.'

Hitler replied, 'I cannot wait until then. If these airmen realise that in the future they will be liquidated as terrorists, they'll think twice about whether to fly over.' Koller responded that neither the Luftwaffe nor the SD would lend themselves to such an order.

The failure to enforce this latest order showed again that Hitler's authority was crumbling. Yet another instance was his ministers' unauthorised peace feelers to the enemy. Ribbentrop sent his English affairs expert, Fritz Hesse, to Stockholm, and when the Swedish press exposed Hesse's mission on March 15 – earning for Ribbentrop a thunderous rebuke from Hitler – a few days later the foreign minister again sent Werner von Schmieden to Switzerland and Consul Eitel Friedrich Moellhausen to Madrid, to seek terms for a halt to the 'frightful bombing and carnage.' Hitler halted all such feelers, causing Reichsmarschall Göring to refer to his stubbornness in a private conversation late in March. In his diary General Koller noted that when he complained about the lack of clear directives from Hitler, 'The Reichsmarschall agreed – he is just as much in the dark. F[ührer] tells him nothing. Nor is it permissible to make the slightest political move, for

example, the attempt of a British diplomat in Sweden to contact us was strictly rebuffed by F. The Führer flatly forbids Reichsmarschall to make any use of his own comprehensive contacts abroad. . . Again and again the foreign minister [Ribbentrop] submits fresh possibilities to F., but he just turns them down.'*

In the west, all attempts at destroying the Remagen bridge across the Rhine failed until it was too late; by the time that German naval frogmen and jet bombers had between them brought it down, the Americans had brought another bridge in service. On the night of March 22, American amphibious tanks sprang yet another bridgehead across the Rhine at Oppenheim. At three A.M. on the twenty-fourth, Montgomery's main Rhine crossing began at Wesel. By March 28 it was clear that the Ruhr was about to be encircled. Whole companies of German troops were throwing away their weapons and deserting. On the Baltic coast, Kolberg had fallen in mid-March after holding out against the Polish and Russian enemy – long enough for sixty thousand of the port's civilians to escape by sea. The civilian evacuation of Königsberg and Danzig was in full swing. In Hungary the counterattacks in which Hitler had vested his hopes had failed dismally.

The speed of events, particularly in the west, stunned Hitler. He had been confident that in the east a great German defensive triumph lay in store. On March 25 he told Gauleiter Fritz Sauckel that for the first time he feared the war was lost.

Captured American troop indoctrination manuals had reached the chancellery; as one Führer adjutant wrote: 'The implacable hatred preached in them against the entire German nation seems little short of the Old Testament language to me.' Early in April, Hitler was shown a British manual for an operation ominously code-named 'Eclipse': it named numerous categories of Germans for 'automatic arrest,' and contained maps of the ultimate dissection of Germany and Berlin into occupation zones.

Brief German reconquests of ground in East Prussia brought fresh reports on the fate of the Germans who had not escaped in time. 'It shall not be! These illiterate brutes shall not inundate all Europe!' Hitler raged. 'I am

* Count Lutz Schwerin von Krosigk also noted in his diary a talk with Goebbels on April 9, 1945, in which Goebbels described how Germany had put out cautious peace feelers. The Russians and Americans had reacted positively, but the British had rejected them out of hand.

the last bulwark against this peril. If there is any justice, then we shall emerge victorious. One day the world will see the moral of this struggle!'

DEFEAT SEEMED certain to all but the most blindly loyal. The hours that Hitler spent with them increased. Dr. Robert Ley, leader of the Labour Front, was now favoured with many hours of Hitler's private conversation. He left Berlin inflated with new courage and conviction, to organise an 'Adolf Hitler' Free Corps in Austria – tank-killer teams trained and equipped to operate behind the Russian lines. 'The Führer was head and shoulders above us all,' wrote Ley after the war. 'And we were too puny for this Titan.'

On March 20 Hitler finally relieved the Reichsführer of command of the Army Group Vistula. 'The Führer saw through Himmler,' wrote Ley. 'I had a long talk with the Führer at the time, in which he bitterly complained of Himmler's disobedience, dishonesty, and incompetence.'

Fundamental to Hitler's predicament was that many of his generals and ministers were already secretly window-dressing for the war crimes trials they regarded as inevitable: Gotthard Heinrici, the mild-mannered, church-going general whom Hitler appointed as Himmler's successor – for want of any better army group commanders – lacked the wholehearted commitment of a Schörner or Model: Field Marshal Model held out with Army Group B, Rommel's old command, in the encircled Ruhr pocket until his guns had spent their last ammunition; he then took his own life to cheat the enemy. This was the spirit which had saved Stalin's Russia in 1941 and 1942. But Hitler's other lieutenants lacked even the will to cheat the enemy of the spoils of war: the arms factories of Upper Silesia fell intact into Russian hands. In January 1945 Speer had not hesitated to order the destruction of Hungarian refineries – a premature act that the OKW was just able to stop in time. By March he was planning less for Germany's defence than for his own. His character was ambivalent and complex. Later he would claim that he 'had counted up all the acts of high treason which he had committed from the end of January onward and had arrived at a total of over sixty.' Hitler never realised this. Disappointed by the failure of Me-262 jet aircraft production, he appointed SS General Hans Kammler to take charge.

Speer was convinced however that his master's war was lost: in a memorandum to Hitler he stated that the enemy air raids and the loss of the coal-bearing regions made 'final economic collapse' inevitable within four to eight weeks. *'After this collapse the war cannot even be militarily continued.'* His memorandum urged Hitler to remember the government's obligation to

its people; he demanded strict orders prohibiting the destruction of factories and bridges, as this could now only harm Germany.

Hitler recognised this document for what it was; he told Guderian he had stuffed it, 'unread,' into the man-high safe at the foot of his bed. He merely indulged Speer when he again argued these points late on March 18: Speer was an intellectual, foreign to the dictates of strategy; and it was the minister's fortieth birthday the next day. But his indulgence cooled when he learned a week later through Party channels that Speer had secretly driven to the west to sabotage Hitler's orders for a scorched-earth policy to slow down the Allied advance. Hitler had issued these orders on March 19, after Keitel's orders issued in January had failed to prevent the scandalous events of Upper Silesia and the Saar. Hitler's directive called for the destruction of all military, transportation, communications, and public utility installations 'insofar as they may be of use to the enemy in the furtherance of his fight.'

VISITING THE west, Speer had spread despondency and gloom, infecting everybody he met and urging them to turn their factories over to the enemy intact. Walking for an hour alone with Goebbels in the chancellery garden on March 27, Hitler revealed that he had decided to remain in Berlin; the propaganda minister afterwards lamented that Bormann and Speer had talked Hitler out of the plan to repudiate the Geneva Convention after the Dresden raid. His soldiers would have had no option but to fight then.

Late the next day, the Führer received Speer and coldly instructed him to stand down as armaments minister since he clearly lacked the necessary faith that the tide could still turn in their favour. Speer flushed and protested, but Hitler challenged him outright. 'Do you still hope for a successful continuation of the war, or is your faith shattered?'

When after twenty-four hours Speer had still not given him a straight answer, Hitler effectively sacked him, although he continued to value his presence at the chancellery as a friend.

He told Goebbels afterward that Speer was now too much in the pocket of big business – he was thinking too much of his future. Jodl, cut from a different cloth, and his military staff attempted in a new OKW order to put Hitler's defence doctrines into practice – instilling into the western army group commanders the need to bring home to the enemy that they were plunging into a Germany 'fanatical with fighting spirit.' 'This is not the time or place for considering the civilian population,' the order concluded. Bormann added his own characteristic warning to his gauleiters: 'Devil take

the one who deserts his gau under enemy attack except with express orders from the Führer, or who does not fight to the last breath in his body – he will be cast out as a deserter and dealt with accordingly.'

Heinrich Himmler's fall from grace was more spectacular. His SS Sixth Panzer Army in Hungary and SS General Sepp Dietrich had failed. 'Punctilious,' assessed Hitler, speaking of the Reichsführer to Goebbels, 'but no warlord.' Nothing could stop the Russians from pouring into Vienna; the Hungarian oil fields were lost. 'If we lose the war, it will be his fault!' Hitler raged, and he ordered that as a punishment Dietrich's principal divisions were to be stripped of their insignia for three days. Himmler was packed off to Vienna like a schoolboy, ordered to reprimand his Waffen SS generals.

General Guderian's dismissal as chief of staff, the next upheaval, resulted from a similar defeat just east of Berlin. Since mid-March 1945 he had been preparing a limited counterattack toward Küstrin from his own Frankfurt bridgehead, hoping to destroy the enemy assault forces massing for the attack on Berlin. But before General Theodor Busse's Ninth Army could begin the counterattack, the Russians struck and encircled Küstrin completely; Busse's own attack on March 22 failed.

Hitler insisted that it be repeated immediately. General Heinrici came to the bunker in person on March 25 to argue lamely for Küstrin to be abandoned to the enemy so that he could conserve what ammunition and gasoline he had for the big defensive battles ahead. But again Hitler insisted on a policy of attack. A purely defensive stance would allow the Russians to pounce at will.

The new attack began on March 28. The German tanks reached Küstrin's outskirts, but once again the infantry failed to follow through and the tanks were brought back. Against Hitler's explicit orders the Küstrin garrison then broke out to the west, knifing through Russian lines which Heinrici and Busse had both described as impenetrable.

Hitler summoned General Busse to the bunker and informed him of his displeasure. Guderian loudly and intemperately defended him, purpling with rage. Hitler cleared the bunker conference room and advised Guderian: 'You need sick leave. I don't think your heart can stand the strain. Come back in six weeks.'

He told Goebbels that the chief of general staff had become 'hysterical and fidgety' – Guderian had 'messed up' the whole eastern front, he had lost his nerve just as at Moscow in the winter of 1941.

WARILY – BECAUSE he knew Hitler's loathing of astrologers – Dr. Goebbels had sent for the horoscopes of the Republic (November 9, 1918) and of the Führer (January 30, 1933), which the Gestapo had kept filed away. That morning, March 30, 1945, he established: 'Both horoscopes agree to a stunning degree.' They could be interpreted as having already predicted the outbreak of war in 1939, the victories until 1941, and the hammer blows of defeat since then; the hardest blows, they prophesied, would fall in this first half of April, while the second half would temporarily give Germany the upper hand again. A period of stalemate would follow until August 1945, in which month peace would return. After three cruel years, the horoscopes concluded, Germany's ascent to greatness would be resumed in 1948.

Determined to persuade Hitler to speak one more time to the German nation, Goebbels descended into the chancellery bunker on March 30. 'The Führer,' he wrote in his diary, 'now has a completely incomprehensible fear of the microphone.' Hitler explained that first he wanted a military victory in the west. In view of the new wave of desertions there he now regretted having turned down Goebbels's suggestion that they repudiate the Geneva Convention. 'He says he allowed Keitel, Bormann, and Himmler to talk him out of it,' Goebbels noted.

The minister therefore opted for a different tack. A month earlier, he said, he had obtained a copy of Thomas Carlyle's magnificent work on Frederick the Great, and he told Hitler now how deeply it had moved him. ('What an example for us all,' Goebbels had written on the fifth, 'and what a source of consolation and inspiration in these difficult times!')

Now he came to the shelter and read aloud to Hitler in his melodious and dramatic voice from Carlyle's fine description of the darkest hours of the Seven Years' War. There came the moment in which Frederick the Great saw no way out, his generals were convinced of imminent defeat, and Prussia's enemies already gloated over her fall. The great king proclaimed in a letter to Count d'Argenson that if the tide had not turned by a certain date he would accept defeat and swallow poison.

Here Carlyle apostrophised, according to Goebbels, 'Brave King! Tarry awhile, because your days of travail will soon pass. Already the sun has risen behind the clouds of your misfortune, and soon it will shine forth.'

Three days before the king's deadline, the Czarina Elizabeth had died; the accession of Peter III to the throne took Russia out of the war; and thus the House of Brandenburg was saved. Goebbels saw tears starting in his Führer's eyes as he laid the book aside.

Later that day, on March 30, Hitler issued a clear-sighted appraisal of the situation 'now that we have failed to shatter the enemy preparations by counterattack.'

He ordered General Heinrici to construct a 'main battle line' two to four miles behind the front line – a bitter lesson he had learned from the Americans on the dawn of his own Ardennes offensive. The moment the Russian offensive was seriously anticipated, Heinrici was to fall back on this second line; the huge enemy artillery bombardment would then fall on the empty trenches of the original front line. Heinrici was also ordered to resite his artillery farther back, where it could saturate the countryside between the present front and the 'main battle line' when the Russian attack began.

THUS HITLER's malevolently brilliant brain was still functioning logically and flexibly. His doctors were later unanimous in agreeing that his sanity remained intact until the end, even though his bloodshot eyes had now became so poor that he had to put on spectacles to read even the documents typed on the special big-face typewriters. His hair had turned an ashen grey, and Morell observed in Hitler for the first time *fetor ex ore* – the clinical description of bad breath. A year before this man had held all of Europe from the North Cape to the Crimea and the Spanish frontier in his thrall; now millions of enemy troops were only an hour's drive away, east and west of his capital, and his headquarters was this shelter. Yet the admiration of his strategic advisers was unimpaired. 'Looking at the whole picture,' General Jodl unashamedly told his interrogators, 'I am convinced that he was a great military leader. Certainly no historian can say that Hannibal was a poor general just because ultimately Carthage was destroyed.'

For Hitler the springtime had brought encouraging signs for the future, which blinded him to the remorseless approach of the enemy armies. His jet reconnaissance planes had reopened the skies over England and Scotland. On March 17 the first Mark XXI submarine had set forth, bound for the east coast of the United States. In February, Stalin had lost 4,600 tanks, against a monthly output of only 2,300; in the first twenty-two days of March no fewer than 5,452 Soviet tanks were claimed destroyed. 'The enemy's reserves will shortly be exhausted,' the General Staff assured the Führer. In the beleaguered fortresses of Breslau and Königsberg German garrisons were still holding out. 'And as long as I have Königsberg I can still claim to the German people that East Prussia is not lost,' Hitler explained in private.

On the Czech frontier, the tough General Ferdinand Schörner fought a twenty-day defensive battle for the industrial city of Moravian Ostrau (Ostrava) which ended on April 3 in a convincing victory. Schörner, said Hitler to Goebbels, was 'one hell of a fellow – the kind you can blindly rely on.' He appointed him field marshal.

During the first week of April this optimism was severely shaken. On April 2 Dr. Karl Brandt privately warned Hitler that national stocks of two-fifths of all essential medical items would run out completely in two months. This put the shortest time-fuse yet on Hitler's strategy: without medicines, disease and epidemic would cut his people down. Now that the Ruhr and Saar arsenals had been overrun, crippling production shortages in weapons, small arms, ammunition, and explosives made a mockery of his efforts to raise divisions from the Hitler Youth or Reich Labour Service battalions.

At his midday war conference on April 1 Hitler had expressly laid down: 'Anybody retreating in Austria is to be shot!' During the afternoon of April 5 however General Otto Wöhler's Army Group South retreated *fifty miles;* Bormann jotted in his diary: '*The Bolsheviks are outside Vienna!*'

Hitler merely sacked the general and replaced him with Lothar Rendulic, the gritty general who had just thwarted Stalin's last assault on the Kurland army group. One of Bormann's Party officials had telephoned that night: 'None of the army group gentlemen' – meaning Wöhler's staff – 'has the slightest faith in their ability to hold back the enemy from penetrating the [Zistersdorf] petroleum fields; nor in fact, and this I must state plainly, do they believe that we can still win. The Luftwaffe blew up all of Vienna's searchlight sites on the night of April 3 without a word to the army group.' Zistersdorf, outside Vienna, was Hitler's only remaining source of petroleum. Vienna itself seemed bent on suicide. From there SS Colonel Skorzeny reported that while tank brigades were running out of gasoline, retreating Luftwaffe units were passing through with truckloads of girls and furniture.

Professor Morell noted that since late March Hitler had hardly set foot outside, just visiting an upper floor of the Reich chancellery once a day for a meal. 'Even the main daily war conference has been held for some time now down in the bunker – for security reasons, as the Führer told me.'

In Berlin the air was choked with flying dust and the smell of burning. The tremor in both hands was more marked than ever, and both eyes red-rimmed with conjunctivitis. On April 7 a famous eye doctor, Professor Löhlein, came to treat him: he determined that the right eye's vision had deteriorated still further, while the left eyelid was growing a chalazion – an

irritating swelling that might have to be surgically removed. 'There is a secretion from both eyes of late,' noted the professor, 'which is understandable in view of the dusty atmosphere in the centre of Berlin. The Führer generally leaves the well-ventilated and illuminated bunker only for short periods, for half an hour to two hours daily, and then goes into the Reich chancellery's garden, which is not badly damaged but is of course quite dusty, particularly when windy. He finds himself then very sensitive both to light and the dust-laden wind. It is difficult to arrange a set treatment in view of the irregularity of his existence and the need for him to be constantly available for reports, et cetera.' Löhlein prescribed warm compresses for the left eye.

All the doctors – Löhlein, Morell, and Stumpfegger – noticed that during the examination of his retina Hitler kept his left hand quite still; the left leg's tremor also ceased. Morell diagnosed these tremors as the first symptoms of Parkinson's Disease, and on April 8 he began electrogalvanic therapy. 'This morning,' he recorded on the ninth, 'the war conference did not end until five-thirty in the morning, and that was followed by tea! Let's hope there's no early morning air raid alert, so he gets enough time to sleep properly.'

Stalin's big Oder offensive might begin any day. General Theodor Busse was confident that his Ninth Army could stop it from reaching Berlin. The Soviet forces were not so overwhelming in numbers as they were in *material* strength: tens of thousands of Russian guns and rocket launchers waited mutely on the Oder's higher eastern bank overlooking the German positions. Yet Hitler was confident of a defensive victory.

Hitler in fact believed that the build-up before Berlin was only a feint and that the real thrust would first be toward Prague. Stalin must surely intend to embrace the important Czech industrial region before his American rivals could reach it. Hitler had chided General Guderian: 'The Russians won't be as stupid as us. We were dazzled by our nearness to Moscow and just had to capture the capital. Remember, Guderian – *you* were the one who wanted to be first into Moscow at the head of your army! And just look at the consequences!'

Whether this was intuition or on General Staff advice the records do not disclose, but at this crucial juncture, he impulsively ordered General Busse to relinquish four SS panzer divisions to Schörner's army group defending Czechoslovakia.

Hitler summoned General Heinrici to the bunker again on April 4 and together they subjected the Oder defences to scrutiny. He reminded Heinrici of the need to lay down deadly minefields at the obvious Schwerpunkt positions; he ordered the Ninth Army to drive tunnels into the strategically crucial Seelow Heights – which commanded the marshy valley west of Küstrin through which the Russian attack must advance – to protect the army's reserves from enemy artillery. He warned him against 'Seydlitz officers' infiltrating in German uniforms. Behind the main front line, thousands of trees were being felled and anti-tank trenches dug.

By April 11 American forces had reached the Elbe at Magdeburg – only sixty miles from Berlin. Hitler was told that a Russian deserter had revealed that the Oder offensive would begin in four days' time. Again he asked for a complete report on Heinrici's army group. The generals assured him that no other sector in Germany was so well provided with troops and artillery. He congratulated Heinrici's officers. 'The Russians are going to suffer their bloodiest defeat ever!' One thing was certain: he could not fight a long battle of attrition because his stocks of aviation fuel would keep the Luftwaffe airborne for only a few days, and – as the quartermaster general warned explicitly on April 15 – all munitions supplies would shortly cease. The factories were in enemy hands. ('There may shortly occur the most momentous consequences for our entire war effort,' the general had warned, while being careful not to spell them out.)

As American troops advanced across Thuringia, Hitler was confronted with the problem of the big concentration camps like Buchenwald. Göring advised him to turn them over intact and under guard to the Western Allies, thus preventing hordes of embittered ex-convicts from roaming the countryside and inflicting additional horrors on the law-abiding.

Hitler did not share Göring's naïve trust in the enemy. Sitting casually on the edge of the map table after one war conference, he instructed Himmler's representative to ensure that all inmates who could not be evacuated were liquidated. Nor had he forgotten his special 'hostage' collection of prominent prisoners held. On April 8 prison officials loaded them aboard prison vans for transfer to the south. There was a kaleidoscope of famous names: Kurt Schuschnigg and his family, General Thomas, Dr. Schacht, General Halder, Molotov's nephew, Captain S. Payne Best (the British Intelligence officer kidnapped in Venlo, Holland, in November 1939), and Colonel Bogislaw von Bonin. These were the fortunate ones, because behind them at Flossenbürg camp they left the traitors Admiral Canaris and Gen-

eral Oster. A few days before, General Buhle had stumbled by chance on the long-sought secret diaries of Canaris, and these sealed the Abwehr chief's fate. He and General Oster were hanged after a summary court-martial on the ninth.

A vague notion of continuing the war from the easily defended mountain regions of Bohemia, Bavaria, and northern Italy had begun to crystallise in Hitler's brain. When Gauleiter Franz Hofer came from the Tyrol on April 9 and urged Hitler to abandon most of northern Italy – arguing that the only arms production of any significance came from the South Tyrol – the Führer pointed out that virtually the entire arms effort now relied on electro-steel supplied by northern Italy. Late on April 10 he ordered Karl-Otto Saur – Speer's *de facto* successor as armaments minister – to investigate the possibility of creating an independent arms industry in the Alps.

If as seemed likely the remaining Reich was cut in two, Admiral Dönitz and Field Marshal Kesselring would rule the northern and southern Reich respectively. Briefing Kesselring at length late on April 12, Hitler talked of General Busse's coming great victory on the Oder, of his new secret weapons, of the Twelfth Army he was raising under General Wenck to defeat the Allies on the Elbe, and of the coming rupture between Stalin and the West.

General Busse shared Hitler's confidence. 'If need be, we'll stand fast here until the Americans are kicking us in the arse,' he said, earthily expressing his strategic convictions to Goebbels that evening; and the propaganda minister assured Busse's more sceptical staff that if there was any justice, some miracle would surely save the Reich, just as in 1762. With gentle irony an officer inquired, 'Which Czarina is going to die, then?' All along the Oder, a troublesome Russian artillery activity had just begun.

The news of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's sudden death on April 12 in Warm Springs, Georgia, reached Hitler that night. Goebbels telephoned, his voice shrill with excitement. 'This *is* the turning point!' All Hitler's ministers agreed that God had wrought a swift and terrible judgement on their hated enemy.

The next morning the Führer began dictating his last famous proclamation, to his soldiers on the eastern front. 'For one last time,' it began, 'our mortal enemies, the Jewish Bolsheviks, are throwing their weight into the attack. . .'

He issued the proclamation to the army groups that night. It closed with a reference to Roosevelt. 'At this moment when fate has carried off the

greatest War Criminal of all times from the face of this earth, the war's turning point has come.'

He seemed to have shut his eyes to the possibility that Berlin itself might become a battlefield; but late on April 13, 1945, when Ribbentrop spoke with him, he gave permission for the nervous diplomatic corps to leave the capital for southern Germany. The next day the shelling of Busse's positions increased, and two hundred Russian tanks launched attacks up to regimental strength; ninety-eight tanks were destroyed. April 15 brought a lull.

It was on this day that Eva Braun unexpectedly arrived back in Berlin, having evidently hitched a truck ride up from Bavaria. She intended to die with him. Some of his male staff also found the decision to remain at Hitler's side until the inevitable end comparatively easy. The last letter which his personal adjutant Alwin-Broder Albrecht now wrote to his wife admitted however: 'It is certainly hard for us men to stand in our last battle far from our families, knowing that our wives and children will later have to face the trials of life alone. But hundreds of thousands of others have found the strength, and I am trying to set an example, however humble, to all my compatriots.'

During the night General Wenck's new army succeeded in destroying one American bridgehead on the Elbe south of Magdeburg and in reducing another. A Russian prisoner taken south of Küstrin revealed however that Stalin's big Oder offensive would begin the next morning – he spoke of a colossal artillery barrage and of mighty new tanks and howitzers standing by, and he reported that the troops had been ordered to wash and shave every day 'to make a cultivated impression' from now on. This detail gave the report the ring of authenticity; Hitler ordered Busse's Ninth Army pulled back into the secret second line of defence.

At his midnight conference he learned with stabbing misgivings of a puzzling request by General Heinrici – for permission to transfer his army group HQ to a new site which Hitler found to be to the *rear* of Berlin and thus *behind* the Führer's own headquarters.*

He flatly forbade such a transfer.

At five A.M. the next morning, April 16, a mighty Russian artillery barrage began all along the Oder and Neisse rivers. Nearly half a million shells

* In defiance of the orders he had accepted from Hitler, Heinrici had secretly decided that if his Oder front collapsed, he would abandon Berlin to the enemy without even the pretence of a fight. Speer claimed to have brought about Heinrici's remarkable decision.

thundered down on the – now virtually abandoned – German forward positions.

At 6:30 A.M. Marshal Zhukov's tanks and infantry began pouring across both sides of the Frankfurt-on-Oder strongpoint still held by Busse's Ninth Army; an hour later the main assault on the Fourth Panzer Army defending the Neisse front began.

The German air force threw all it had into the battle. In a second unsung kamikaze operation, sixty Luftwaffe planes manned by suicide pilots crash-bombed the Oder bridges across which the enemy was flooding westward. By nightfall, although a five-mile-deep breach had been torn into the front near Wriezen, there was no doubt in the chancellery that Hitler's generals had inflicted a resounding defeat on the enemy.

His secretary Christa Schroeder asked timidly whether they would now be leaving Berlin. Hitler answered almost resentfully, 'No. Calm down – Berlin will always be German!'

The secretary replied that she regarded her life as spent already. 'But I can't quite see how it's all going to end, with the Americans coming closer every day on one side and the Russians on the other.'

'Time!' explained Hitler. 'We've just got to gain time!'



The diary kept for Hitler by his manservant Heinz Linge records him retiring to bed ever later in the final weeks – around 5 a.m. (NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

'Eclipse'

There are clues in the documents as to how long Hitler believed he could postpone the end: for example, he had ordered the General Staff to provision the Berlin area with logistics sufficient to hold out for twenty days, should the city be surrounded. If open conflict had not broken out between Stalin and the Americans by then, Hitler realised, his gamble had failed; it would be his 'Eclipse,' to use the code name assigned by his victorious enemies to the post-war carve-up of the Reich.

By April 15, 1945, the document outlining this plan – captured from the British in the west – was in his hands; its maps revealed that Berlin was to be an enclave far inside the Russian occupation zone, divided like Germany itself into British, American, and Russian sectors.

What encouraged Hitler, studying these maps, was the fact that the American spearheads, in reaching the Elbe, had already encroached on Stalin's zone, while the Russians had duly halted at the demarcation line on reaching Saint-Pölten in Austria late on April 15. Foreign Armies East reported on the fifteenth that Russian officers were apprehensive that the Americans were preparing an attack ('We must drench the Americans "*accidentally*" with our artillery fire,' Russians had said, 'to let them taste the lash of the Red Army'). Over and over during the next two weeks Hitler restated the belief that sustained him: 'Perhaps the others' – meaning Britain and the United States – 'can be convinced, after all, that there is only one man capable of halting the Bolshevik colossus, and that is me.' This was the point of fighting an otherwise hopeless battle for Berlin.

So far the British had been blinded by their hatreds, but the Americans suddenly proved more amenable. On the night of April 17, SS General Hermann Fegelein – Himmler's representative – informed Hitler that the

secret talks between SS General Karl Wolff and Allen Dulles in Switzerland had resulted in draft terms for a separate armistice on the Italian front. The enemy alliance could thereby be torn asunder. At three A.M. the Führer sent for Wolff and congratulated him. He asked the general not to leave Berlin until the next evening, to give him time to think it over. 'I am grateful that you've succeeded in opening the first doorway to the West,' he said. 'Of course, the terms are very bad.' But by five P.M. his mood had hardened again. Strolling with Wolff, Kaltenbrunner, and Fegelein in the chancellery garden, he enlarged on his own hopeful theories. 'I want the front to hold for eight more weeks. I am waiting for East and West to fall out. We are going to hold the Italian fortress at all costs, and Berlin too.'

Franz von Sonnleitner came to take leave of Hitler – Ribbentrop was sending him south to take care of the Italian Gold. Hitler probably knew he would not see this Austrian Party veteran again. For a while, standing in the chancellery's bare first floor salon with its sagging floor, they talked about Salzburg, Sonnleitner's home town. The latter's mention that a stick of bombs had struck down the cathedral's dome was the signal for Hitler to take refuge in architectural nostalgia: the Americans, he said, were destroying Europe's great treasures because they had none of their own. He reflected on his own misplaced chivalry in sparing Rome by declaring it an open city in June 1944; he had inflicted more disadvantage on his own troops when he spared Florence's famed Ponte Vecchio too; he had ordered the demolition of the casino at Ostend, he said, only with utter reluctance, to meet the demands of the local coastal sector command.

He sighed and consoled Sonnleitner: 'Never mind – Salzburg's cathedral will be rebuilt, and fast.' Seeing the diplomat's incredulous expression, Hitler continued: 'Just think of the colossal capacity that will become available when we go over from wartime to peacetime production!' They shook hands and parted.

Hitler would not countenance the least vestige of defeatism. He had ordered the arrest of his former surgeon, Dr. Karl Brandt, for sending his wife and family to Bad Liebenstein, where they would fall into American hands; on April 18, Brandt was summarily condemned to death.*

ENTIRE ARMIES could not be court-martialed for losing heart. Zistersdorf fell to the Russians. On the seventeenth Gauleiter August Eigruber cabled

* Brandt survived the war, only to be hanged by the Americans at Landsberg in 1947.

from Linz that 'the petroleum fields are in jeopardy'; by the next day General Hans Kreysing's Eighth Army had already abandoned them precipitously, after destroying the installations. Himmler reported to Hitler that in Austria the army's tendency was to retreat everywhere even though 'Ivan is obviously both wary and weary of fighting.' This was Hitler's second motive for making a last stand in Berlin: to set an example to his generals and thereby restore his personal authority over them.

GREAT SLAUGHTER had been inflicted on the Russians. On the sixteenth alone Busse's Ninth Army had destroyed 211 tanks – and destroyed 106 more the next day – on the Oder front; General Fritz Gräser's adjacent Fourth Panzer Army knocked out 93 and 140 tanks respectively on the Neisse front. Busse's front was still intact; but at Wriezen in particular the Russians had hammered a deep wedge into the main German line. Southeast of Berlin Marshal Konev's army group had thrown two bridgeheads across the Neisse on the very first day – in fact just where Hitler had foreseen the Russian Schwerpunkt, though angled differently. Russian tanks were already approaching Cottbus and the Spree River at Spremberg: Konev's objective, like Zhukov's, was obviously Berlin and not Prague. This gave Hitler rather less time than he had thought.

On April 17 Hitler ordered the autobahn bridges blown up and every available aircraft, including the Messerschmitt jets, thrown in to stop the enemy reaching Cottbus. At his midday conference he proclaimed: 'The Russians are in for the bloodiest defeat imaginable before they reach Berlin!' After that he sat brooding far into the night with Eva Braun and his secretaries, trying to convince them and himself that the wedge at Wriezen was just the natural luck of the attacker. He began to blame General Heinrici for the crisis on the Oder front – calling him 'a plodding, irresolute pedant lacking the necessary enthusiasm for the job.'

DURING THE eighteenth a furious battle was fought for Seelow, the high plateau commanding the Russian assault area. By evening it was firmly in Zhukov's hands, and Hitler learned that only the SS 'Nederland' Division – a volunteer unit of Dutchmen – had been thrown into a counterattack.

He erupted then, and he erupted again when he learned that Goebbels had sent five battalions of wholly unsuitable Berlin Volkssturm 'troops' to the Oder front, although such troops were meant to be used only as a last resort in defence of their own towns and villages. There were enough able-

bodied soldiers who could have been sent, if only they had had the guns and ammunition.

In an endeavour to halt the onset of his patient's Parkinsonism – the trembling limbs – Professor Morell had begun, on the eve of the Soviet offensive, to administer rapidly increasing doses of two exotic medicines. 'As the tremor is a variety of *paralysis agitans*,' he had noted on April 15, 1945, circumspectly using the Latin phrase, 'I am having a shot at influencing it temporarily by subcutaneous injections of Harmin, and administering Homburg-680.' (Both were chemicals extracted from deadly nightshade, indicated only for Parkinsonism.) The next day he gave another Harmin injection and administered one drop of Homburg-680 in the evening. On the seventeenth he tried two drops and observed a slight improvement. He decided to step up the dosage. Hitler's desk calendar, found in September 1945 in the ruins of the bunker, shows that Morell had left daily instructions for the anti-Parkinson medication to be steadily increased to thirteen drops a day on the twenty-eighth (the final entry).

From now until the end Hitler slept only fitfully and irregularly. After the regular Harmin injection on the eighteenth, the doctor recorded: 'Tremor in the left hand somewhat improved, but drowsy. Sleeping at night now possible only with Tempidorms.'

The days were punctuated by an unending series of ill tidings, each one bringing the end much closer than its predecessor. Restless and pallid, Hitler rambled around the shelter, took brief strolls upstairs, then sat in the telephone exchange or machine room, or visited his dogs in their makeshift kennels behind the lavatories. He took to sitting in the passageway with one of the puppies on his lap, silently staring at the officers passing by.

The latest dispatch of Heinrici's army group on April 19 stated that at Müncheberg, due east of Berlin, and at Wriezen, farther north, the Russians had finally broken through into open country between five and six p.m. Immense tank forces were pouring through the two breaches. At Müncheberg alone tank-killer squads and aircraft destroyed sixty Soviet tanks during the next few hours, while the Ninth Army's total that day was twenty-two. 'The battle,' Heinrici's army group reported that evening, 'is about to be decided.'

Hitler called for Dr. Morell, and at his behest the physician crudely drained a quantity of blood from Hitler's right arm until it blocked the hypodermic needle and Morell had to force a somewhat larger needle into

the veins. Heinz Linge the manservant blanched as the blood ran into a beaker, but wisecracked: 'Mein Führer, all we need do now is mix the blood with some fat and we could put it on sale as Führer blood sausage!' Hitler repeated the unpleasant witticism to Eva and the secretaries that evening.

MIDNIGHT WOULD bring his fifty-sixth birthday. Bormann wanly recorded that it was 'not exactly a birthday situation.' Hitler had asked his staff to refrain from ceremony, but Eva Braun cajoled him into stepping into the anteroom and shaking hands with the adjutants. Saur had brought a scale-model of a 350-millimetre mortar for Hitler's collection. Hitler spoke for a while with Goebbels and Ley about his determination to defend the Alpine Redoubt and Bohemia-Moravia in the south, and Norway in the north; then he retired to drink tea with Eva. All night after that he lay awake, until the knocking of Linge told him it was morning. General Burgdorf was outside the door. He shouted that during the night the Russians had broken through Schörner's army group on both sides of Spremberg; the Fourth Panzer Army was trying to repair the breaches by a counterattack. Hitler merely said, 'Linge, I haven't slept yet. Wake me an hour later than usual, at two P.M.'

When he awoke Berlin was under heavy air attack. It was now April 20, 1945. His eyes were stinging; Morell gave him a glucose injection, then Hitler fondled a puppy for a while before lunching with Eva and the two duty-secretaries, Johanna Wolf and Christa Schroeder. There was no conversation. After lunch they all picked their way along the duckboards into the Voss Bunker, to steal another look at the model of Linz; he identified to them the house where he had spent his youth.

Wrapped in a grey coat with its collar turned up, he climbed the spiral staircase to the chancellery garden followed by Goebbels. The Berlin air was thick with the dust and smoke from a hundred fires. A short line of fresh-faced Hitler Youths awaited decoration for bravery; a photographer captured the scene as he walked along the line. The perimeter wall was punctuated by dugouts and piles of bazookas at the ready. Near the music room a small parade of troops from the Kurland battlefield awaited inspection. Hitler apologised for not being able to speak very loudly, but he did promise that victory would be theirs and that they could tell their children that they had been there when it was finally won.

At about four P.M. that afternoon, he retraced his steps into the shelter, having seen the sky for the last time.

Before the main war conference began, he allowed his principal ministers in one at a time to proffer formal birthday greetings. Field Marshal Keitel dropped a broad hint that it was time for the Führer to leave this city, but Hitler interrupted: 'Keitel, I know what I want – I am going to fight in front of Berlin, fight in Berlin, and fight behind Berlin!'

The conference began immediately. Both north and south of Berlin the Russian armoured spearheads were hurtling westward. Unless Schörner's counterattack succeeded, the last main road south would be cut in a matter of hours. General Koller pointed out that the truckloads of OKW equipment and documents would have to leave Berlin for the south immediately.

Hitler authorised an immediate splitting of the command: Dönitz and part of the OKW staff were to leave for northern Germany; another part were to leave at once for the south. He gave the impression that he would in due course follow. Bormann left the room at once to organise sufficient armoured transport and omnibuses for the transfer.

Göring – whose own truckloads of property were already waiting for the word to go – inquired, 'Mein Führer, do you have any objection to my leaving for Berchtesgaden now?' Hitler frigidly granted Göring's plea.

At 9:30 P.M., as a new air raid started, he sent for the two older secretaries, Johanna Wolf and Christa Schroeder. The latter wrote a shorthand note on this a few days after:

> Pale, tired, and listless, he met us in his tiny bunker study where we had eaten our meals or had tea with him of late. He said that the situation had changed for the worse over the last four days. 'I find myself compelled to split up my staff and as you are the more senior you go first. A car is leaving for the south in one hour. You can each take two suitcases, Martin Bormann will tell you the rest.'
>
> I asked to stay in Berlin, so that my younger colleague could go as her mother lived in Munich. He replied, 'No, I'm going to start a resistance movement and I'll need you two for that.' . . . He put out his hand to stop any further argument.
>
> He noticed how downcast we were, and tried to console us. 'We'll see you soon, I'm coming down myself in a few days' time!' In the midst of our packing the phone rang. I answered it – it was the Chief.
>
> In a toneless voice he said, 'Girls, we're cut off . . . your car won't get through now. You'll have to fly at dawn.' But soon after he phoned again. 'Girls, you'll have to hurry. The plane's leaving as soon as the all-clear

sounds.' His voice sounded melancholy and dull and he stopped in mid-sentence. I said something, but although he still had not hung up, he made no reply.

Still more tanks were pouring through the big gap between the Fourth Panzer and Ninth armies. Schörner's counterattack had begun, but when Hitler called on Heinrici to attack, in order to close this gap, the army group commander demurred, demanding permission to pull back the Ninth Army's right flank instead, as it seemed in danger of encirclement.

As Heinrici could give Hitler no assurances that this would not cost the flank corps its entire artillery, Hitler ordered the line held where it was. Heinrici telephoned the General Staff half an hour after midnight to protest that Hitler's order was 'unrealisable and hopeless.' 'I ought to declare: "Mein Führer, as the order is against your interests I request you to relieve me of my command . . . then I can go into battle as an ordinary Volkssturm man with a gun in my hand!"'

General Krebs dryly pointed out: 'The Führer expects you to make a supreme effort to plug the gaps as far east as possible, using everything you can scrape together, regardless of Berlin's later defence.'

In fact General Heinrici had already decided to override Hitler's orders. The Ninth Army, he felt, should withdraw westward while it still could. Thus the breach which must eventually seal Berlin's fate was further widened. But at the time Hitler believed that his orders were being obeyed.

THAT NIGHT he finally resolved not to leave Berlin.

Cramped in his study with his two remaining secretaries, Traudl Junge and Gerda Daranowski, he explained, 'I must force the decision here in Berlin or go down fighting.' Using the code name for Hitler, Bormann cabled to the Berghof: 'Wolf is staying here, because if anybody can master the situation here, it is only he.'

Hardly anybody arrived for the night conference. Krebs' operations officer brought the grim news that the breach in the Fourth Panzer Army had widened still farther. Hitler calmly blamed this on that army's 'betrayal.' The officer challenged him. 'Mein Führer, do you really believe so much has been betrayed?' Hitler cast him a pitying look. 'All our defeats in the east are solely the result of treachery.'

At one A.M., he dismissed the two stenographers, Kurt Peschel and Hans Jonuschat, so that they too could catch that night's plane south. Ambassa-

dor Walther Hewel stuck his head around the door. 'Mein Führer, do you have any orders for me yet?' Hitler shook his head. Ribbentrop's representative exclaimed, 'Mein Führer, the zero hour is about to strike! If you still plan to achieve anything by political means, it's high time now!'

Hitler replied with an exhausted air, 'When I'm dead you'll have more than enough politics to contend with.'

Outside, the all-clear was just sounding. Admiral von Puttkamer was leaving; Karl-Otto Saur joined him on the plane, with orders to organise in the Alps what arms production he could. About eighty other staff members flew south that night.

THE NEXT morning, April 21, there was a hammering on Hitler's bedroom door. Linge shouted that artillery had begun pouring shells into the heart of Berlin. Hitler telephoned orders to the OKL to identify and attack the Russian battery at once; General Koller assured him: 'The Russians have no railway bridges across the Oder. Perhaps they have captured and turned around one of our heavy batteries.' Soon after, Koller came on the phone again; the offending Russian battery had been spotted from the observation post atop the towering anti-aircraft bunker at the zoo. It was just eight miles away – at Marzahn.

Throughout the day a growing sense of isolation seized Hitler's bunker. Nothing had been heard from General Helmuth Weidling's Fifty-sixth Panzer Corps, due east of the city, since the previous evening. According to one incredible report, Weidling himself had fled with his staff to the Olympic village *west* of Berlin; his arrest was ordered. The jets had been prevented by enemy fighter patrols from operating against the Russian spearheads south of Berlin. Hitler angrily phoned Koller. 'Then the jets are quite useless, the Luftwaffe is quite superfluous!' Later he again angrily called up Koller. 'The entire Luftwaffe command ought to be strung up!' and he slammed the phone down. Heinrici – ordered to report in person to the shelter that day – asked to be excused as he was 'completely overburdened.' He successfully avoided having to look his Führer in the eye ever again.

During the afternoon Hitler began planning a last attempt at plugging the breach torn in Heinrici's front north-east of Berlin. An *ad hoc* battle group under the bullet-headed SS General Felix Steiner must push south during the night from Eberswalde to Werneuchen; if Steiner succeeded, Zhukov's advanced forces north of Berlin would be cut off. Hitler's detailed order to Steiner, issued about five P.M., had an hysterical undertone:

> Any officers failing to accept this order without reservations are to be arrested and shot at once. You will account with your life for the execution of this order.

Krebs repeated this to the over-busy Heinrici by telephone, but Heinrici was also preoccupied with salvaging his right flank – the Ninth Army's flank corps – from Russian encirclement at Fürstenwalde. 'All I can manage now is to pull it back *south* of the string of lakes south-east of Berlin,' Heinrici warned. This was tantamount to abandoning Berlin. As for the Steiner attack, if the Führer insisted on it, then Heinrici asked to be replaced as Steiner's superior.

Hitler insisted, but did not replace him. He was running out of generals. At nine P.M. he learned that a battalion of the 'Hermann Göring' Division was still defending the Reichsmarschall's abandoned forest palace, Carinhall. He ordered the force handed to Steiner, and when Koller plaintively telephoned at 10:30 P.M. to ask where Steiner was, the Führer snatched the phone from Krebs's hand and rasped, 'Any commander holding men back will have breathed his last breath within five hours. . . You yourself will pay with your life unless every last man is thrown in.' Krebs confirmed this. 'Everybody into the attack from Eberswalde to the south!' – and hung up.

What orders Heinrici now issued to Steiner we do not know. But to attack Zhukov's flank with a motley collection of demoralised, ill-armed troops would be courting disaster. Steiner therefore did nothing.

THE SS GENERAL's inactivity was the last straw for Hitler, after Sepp Dietrich's fiasco in Hungary. In the narrow confines of his bunker, the Führer suffered an apparent nervous breakdown on April 22. Little now stood between Central Berlin and seemingly inevitable defeat. The Russians were in Köpenick, an eastern suburb, and approaching Spandau. By evening they might well be fighting in the government quarter itself. This was the military position as Krebs finally secured Hitler's authorisation for the garrison at Frankfurt-on-Oder to abandon that city to the enemy as well.

The war conference on April 22 began routinely at about three P.M. Hitler asked about the operation which had obviously been in the foreground of his mind all night – Steiner's counterattack in the north. An SS authority assured him the attack had begun; within the hour however General Koller came on the phone with word that Steiner had not yet begun his attack. This betrayal and deceit by the SS, of all people, shook Hitler to the

core. He straightened up and purpled. He suspected a *fait accompli*, to force him to leave Berlin. His eyes bulged. 'That's it,' he shouted. 'How am I supposed to direct the war in such circumstances! The war's lost! But if you gentlemen imagine I'll leave Berlin now, then you've got another think coming. I'd sooner put a bullet in my brains!' Hitler abruptly stalked out. Walther Hewel telephoned Foreign Minister Ribbentrop in extreme agitation: 'The Führer's had a nervous breakdown – he's going to shoot himself!'

Hitler ordered a telephone call put through to Goebbels and dictated to him an announcement: 'I have decided to stay to the end of the battle in Berlin.' He ordered Goebbels to bring his family to the shelter.

Schaub hobbled in. 'Schaub – we must destroy all the documents here at once. Get some gasoline.' They retired into his tiny bedroom.

While Schaub opened the safe and stuffed its contents into a brown suitcase on the bed, Hitler took his lightweight pistol from his trouser pocket and exchanged it for the more lethal 7.65-millimetre Walther PPK from the bedside table. From the upstairs safes more suitcases were filled, and then emptied into a crater in the garden. For a while Hitler stood with Schaub, watching his papers consumed by the flames. 'Richelieu once said, give me five lines one man has penned!' Hitler lamented afterward. 'What I have lost! My dearest memories! But what's the point – sooner or later you've got to get rid of all that stuff.'

HITLER'S ANGUISHED staff realised that he intended to remain in Berlin and brave the coming storm. Goebbels, Bormann, and Jodl begged him to reconsider. Dönitz and Himmler telephoned; Keitel cornered Hitler alone but was interrupted almost at once.

'I know what you're going to say: It's time to take a real decision, a *Ganzer Entschluss*! I've taken it already. I'm going to defend Berlin to the bitter end. Either I restore my command here in the capital – assuming Wenck keeps the Americans off my back and throws them back over the Elbe – or I go down here in Berlin with my troops fighting for the symbol of the Reich.'

Jodl pointed out that if Hitler committed suicide in Berlin, the German army would be leaderless. Unmoved, Hitler called Martin Bormann in, and ordered him, Keitel, and Jodl to fly to Berchtesgaden that night to continue the war with Göring as acting Führer. All three refused.

Somebody objected that there was not one German soldier who would be willing to fight for the Reichsmarschall. Hitler retorted, 'There's not

much fighting left to be done. And when it comes to negotiating, the Reichsmarschall will be better at that than I.'

It was nearly five p.m., and the Russians were now reported to have taken the Silesia station. Hitler's petrified staff clustered in the passageway, many of them expecting to hear pistol shots announcing that Hitler had abandoned them. In a private aside to Eva Braun, General Burgdorf put their chances at only ten percent.

Jodl now had a brain-wave: he reminded Hitler of the demarcation line shown on the captured 'Eclipse' maps and suggested that they should swing Wenck's Twelfth Army around from west to east and use it to relieve Berlin. Hitler shrugged. 'Do whatever you want!'

Perhaps, as Jodl argued, *now* the Allies would take his anti-Bolshevik intent seriously. Keitel announced that he would drive in person to give the necessary orders to Wenck that night. Hitler ordered a hearty meal prepared for the field marshal before he set out.

HITLER WAS not appalled at the prospect of his own imminent death. At an August 1944 war conference he had told his generals that in death he would look for 'a release from my sorrows and sleepless nights and from this nervous suffering. It takes only the fraction of a second – then one is cast free from all that and rests in eternal peace.' Besides, as he told Field Marshal Schörner, his death might remove the last obstacle preventing the Allies from making common cause with Germany. If Model could find the courage to take his own life, so would he; he, Adolf Hitler, was no Paulus.

He gruffly instructed Eva Braun and the two remaining secretaries to get changed and fly south. Eva took both his hands in hers. 'But you know I am going to stay here with you!' Hitler's eyes glistened, and he kissed her lightly on the lips. Frau Junge chimed in, 'I'll stay too!' and Frau Christian echoed her. 'I wish my generals were as brave as you,' Hitler replied.

Despite a telephone call from his liaison officer, Hermann Fegelein, Himmler had failed to show up at the shelter, evidently fearing from what Fegelein told him that he would be arrested for SS General Steiner's passivity; Fegelein was sent to meet him halfway, but now he failed to return. Hitler learned that Himmler had a battalion of six hundred SS troops for his own safety outside Berlin; he invited Himmler through his personal doctor, Karl Gebhardt, to contribute them to the defence of the chancellery.

Some time after, Himmler's chief lieutenant, General Gottlob Berger, arrived. Hitler repeated to him his reproaches about the SS's disloyalty and

asked Berger to go to Bavaria to crush the dissident and separatist movements stirring there and in Württemberg and Austria. His last instruction to Berger before the latter flew south was to round up as many British and American officer-prisoners as possible and transport them under guard to the Alpine Redoubt – as hostages.

Under cover of darkness, still more of his staff left Berlin. Pale and wheezing, Professor Morell offered Hitler a last injection before he left, a morphine pick-me-up, but Hitler suspected that a plot might be afoot to drug him and evacuate him from Berlin by force. 'You can take off that uniform and go back to your practice in the Kurfürstendamm!'

Morell flew out that night. Hitler sent out the remaining two staff stenographers as well; their orders were to take the last shorthand records to the 'outside world.' He now instructed his press officer, Heinz Lorenz, to take down the remaining war conferences.

Lorenz's fragmentary shorthand notes – which begin with Keitel's exhausted return with Jodl from the battlefield at three P.M. on April 23 – reveal the growing desperation at Hitler's shelter. 'It is all so abominable! When you come to think it over, what's the point of living on!' exclaimed Hitler. Steiner had made no discernible move with his 25th Panzer-Grenadier and 7th Panzer divisions at Eberswalde, north of the capital. The Russians had swarmed across the Havel River between Oranienburg and Spandau.

The situation on Germany's other fronts no longer occupied Hitler. The bunker conferences devolved only on the defences of Berlin. Hitler's last stratagem began unfolding. At noon Goebbels's ministry released the news. 'The Führer is in Berlin. . . Our leadership has resolved to remain in Berlin and defend the Reich capital to the end.' Lorenz recorded Hitler's belief thus: 'The enemy now knows I am here. . . That gives us an excellent opportunity of luring them into an ambush. But this depends on all our people realising the importance of this hour and genuinely obeying the orders they get from above; they must be honest about it! This business up here' – indicating Steiner on the map – 'was downright dishonest!'

General Krebs interjected, 'I believe we still have four days' time.'

'In four days we'll know the outcome,' agreed Hitler.

The 'ambush' to which Hitler referred was the plan Keitel and Jodl had proposed – for Wenck's army on the Elbe and Mulde fronts to be turned around, to link up south of Berlin with Busse's Ninth Army and then strike northward toward Potsdam and Berlin, mopping up the elite Russian troops

they thereby cut off. At the same time the Forty-first Panzer Corps – commanded by the reliable General Rudolf Holste, an old regimental comrade of Keitel's – would be brought back across the Elbe, to counterattack between Spandau and Oranienburg; Steiner was to turn over his mechanised divisions (the 25th Panzer-Grenadiers and the 7th Panzer) to Holste.

The realist in Hitler whispered that defeat was inevitable. Eva Braun wrote to her sister that April 23: 'The Führer himself has lost all hope of a happy ending.' Later that day, however, she added: 'At present things are said to be looking up. General Burgdorf who gave us only a 10 percent chance yesterday has raised the odds to 50-50 today. Perhaps things may turn out well after all!'

Hitler drank chocolate with Goebbels's children who had now moved into Morell's quarters. Hellmut read aloud his school essay on the Führer's birthday. Helga squawked, 'You stole that from Papa!' 'You mean Papa stole it from me!' retorted Hellmut, to the delight of the adult listeners.

BEFORE KEITEL returned to Wenck's headquarters, he came in to see Hitler and quietly inquired whether any talks at all were proceeding with the enemy. Hitler replied that he must win 'one more' victory – the Battle for Berlin. He disclosed that he had asked Ribbentrop to discuss further steps with him that evening. Ribbentrop's only proposal however was to have top Czech industrialists flown that night to France, where they would attempt to persuade the Americans to protect Bohemia and Moravia from the Bolsheviks. 'The Führer has agreed to this,' Ribbentrop informed Karl-Hermann Frank by letter. For the first time Hitler now admitted to Ribbentrop that the war was lost. He dictated to Ribbentrop four secret negotiation points to put to the British if he got the chance. If the Continent was to survive in a world dominated by Bolshevism, then somehow London and Berlin must bury the hatchet. He instructed Ribbentrop to write secretly to Churchill in this sense. 'You will see,' Hitler predicted. 'My spirit will arise from the grave. One day people will see that I was right.'

When Ribbentrop left, an adjutant announced that Albert Speer had just made a venturesome landing by light plane on the East–West Axis. Eva Braun, who like Hitler had been troubled by the recurring rumours of Speer's inexplicable behaviour, greeted the ex-minister warmly. 'I knew you'd return – you won't desert the Führer!'

Speer grinned. 'I'm leaving Berlin again tonight!' Hitler asked his opinion on his decision to fight the battle for Berlin to its end; Speer's brutal

advice was that it was more seemly to die there than in his weekend cottage on the Obersalzberg, that is, if the Führer attached any importance to the verdict of history. Hitler, unaware that Speer had secretly arranged with General Heinrici for Berlin to be abandoned, agreed.

AFTER THE war conference, Bormann brought to Hitler a startling telegram just received from Göring at Berchtesgaden. Göring, it seemed, was seizing power. 'Mein Führer,' this began:

> In view of your decision to remain in the fortress of Berlin, are you agreed that I immediately assume overall leadership of the Reich as your Deputy, in accordance with your decree of June 29, 1941, with complete freedom of action at home and abroad?
>
> Unless an answer is given by ten P.M. I will assume you have been deprived of your freedom of action. I shall then regard the conditions laid down by your Decree as being met, and shall act in the best interests of the people and Fatherland.
>
> You know my feelings for you in these the hardest hours of my life. I cannot express them adequately.
>
> May God protect you and allow you to come here soon despite everything. —Your loyal HERMANN GÖRING

Ribbentrop had received from Göring a telegram asking the foreign minister to fly down and join him immediately. Keitel had also heard from Göring. Hitler immediately cabled Göring that he alone would decide when the Decree of June 29, 1941, took effect; Göring was forbidden to undertake any steps in the direction he had hinted at. The Führer then ordered Göring placed under house arrest. Thus with characteristic hesitancy Hitler took the decision with which he had been grappling since September 1944, dismissing Göring. He telegraphed the Reichsmarschall: 'Your actions are punishable by death, but because of your valuable services in the past I shall refrain from instituting proceedings if you will voluntarily relinquish your offices and titles. Otherwise steps will have to be taken.'

This was not drastic enough for Martin Bormann, as the handwritten telegrams found three months later on his desk in the bunker's ruins show.*

* These were first published in this author's biography of the Reichsmarschall, *Göring* (William Morrow, New York & Macmillan, London, 1989).

Acting apparently on Hitler's orders Bormann cabled to SS Colonel Bernhard Frank, commander of the SS unit on the Obersalzberg: 'Surround the Göring villa at once and arrest the former Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring immediately, smashing all resistance.'

Bormann had other old scores to settle with Speer and Lammers too. His next telegram to Frank read:

> You guarantee with your neck for the execution of the Führer's order. Find out where Speer is. Take Lammers into custody, honourable as yet. Act circumspectly but like lightning. Bormann.

His own days might be numbered, but Bormann was in his own vicious element. To Gauleiter Paul Giesler of Munich he cabled this instruction: 'Führer issued to SS unit on O'berg order for immediate arrest of Reichsmarschall Göring for plotting high treason. Smash any resistance. Occupy airfields at Salzburg, etc., immediately to prevent aeroplane flight . . . Bormann.' At 10:25 p.m. he phoned Grand Admiral Dönitz in northern Germany and told him the Führer had forbidden any elements of the Reich government to fly south to join Göring – 'That's got to be prevented at all costs.'

There was uproar in the bunker about Göring's 'treachery.' Before leaving it for the last time Speer wrote to General Galland, now a jet-fighter squadron commander in Bavaria: 'The Führer has . . . ordered Göring's arrest. I request you and your comrades to do everything to prevent any aeroplane flight by Göring in the manner discussed.' Thus Speer hoped – literally – to see his old enemy shot down at the eleventh hour. But at 11:44 p.m. a telegram arrived from the Obersalzberg, cheating Speer of this little triumph: 'Mein Führer,' Frank reported. 'Beg to report Hermann Göring & Co arrested. . . No incidents so far. Details follow.' Hitler ordered Colonel-General Robert Ritter von Greim to fly into Berlin, to take over the Luftwaffe; but the general's takeoff from Munich was delayed by an air raid.

On the following day, April 24, Hitler subordinated the General Staff's eastern front to the OKW's operations staff. The horizons were drawing in on him. Soon he would be able to communicate with the outside world only via a telephone line to the admiralty's still-functioning signals room. Jodl's clear instructions to the armies were repeated by Hitler on April 24: generals Holste, Wenck, Schörner, and Busse were to speed up their relief

attacks toward Berlin, from north-west, south-west, and south respectively, and 'restore a broad land contact with Berlin again, thereby bringing the Battle of Berlin to a victorious conclusion.' But apart from Wenck and Schörner, Hitler's commanders were driven only by the compulsion to escape the Russian grasp themselves before the final collapse came.

Apart from word that part of the Ninth Army had been encircled south-east of Berlin, there was no news of the army until Weidling, the 'missing' commander of its Fifty-sixth Panzer Corps, reached Berlin's outskirts and the public telephone; he thereafter stormed into the chancellery, protesting his innocence of the charge of desertion. Hitler willingly appointed this fiery general battle-commandant of Berlin.

Weidling's new task was nigh impossible. Hitler and Goebbels had optimistically sacrificed the capital's resources to the forward defences on the Oder; a decamping army commandant had blown up Berlin's last major ammunition dump at Krampnitz. Weidling would have hardly any tanks. Apart from the shattered remnants of his own corps, the coming street battles would be fought between trained, professional Russian combat troops with the glint of final victory in their eyes, and a few thousand German flak soldiers, Volkssturm men, and police units.

About 2,700 youths had been mustered into a tank-killer brigade; Hitler assigned this Hitler-Youth offering to the defence of the bridges across which the armies must surely soon march in to his relief. From Flensburg, Admiral Dönitz promised to airlift two thousand of his best soldiers and fortress troops into Berlin in the next forty-eight hours and to put 3,500 more of his most cherished fleet personnel – including crews trained to operate the new secret U-boat types – on standby for the fight; if Berlin did not win this last battle, those submarines would never operate.

He kept his promise, unlike Himmler who eventually parted with only half his personal security battalion. Even Ribbentrop courageously requested permission to take up arms in Berlin. Hewel telegraphed him in Mecklenburg: 'The Führer appreciates your intentions but has turned you down. Until the ring encircling Berlin has been broken open, or until you receive further instructions, you are to stand by outside the combat area.'

Hewel added significantly: 'I have no political information whatever.' Disregarding Hitler's veto, Ribbentrop asked a panzer unit to let him go with them on a combat patrol; this time General Weidling himself turned him down.

Heinrich Himmler too was outside the closing Soviet ring. Bormann dictated to his secretary Ilse Krüger this (previously unpublished) situation report for the Reichsführer:

Bo/Kr. April 25, 1945

My dear Heinrich!

Fegelein mentioned on the phone you'd be coming in, but given the dangers involved you should not fly in but remain outside. The Führer emphasised how valuable and indispensable your work is. The Führer's main motives for remaining in Berlin are as follows. . . Besides, would it be right for the Reich government and Führer to 'pull back' – to use that rotten word – just as light-heartedly and often as our army units do! If the leadership demands that the soldiers stand fast then it too must know and toe a line which cannot be stepped over. . . In southern Germany a government would have as little prospect of survival as in the north. Even the much vaunted Last Redoubt in the Tyrol would very rapidly cave in. . . The total collapse after the capitulation of Berlin and northern Germany would immediately overwhelm the eastern front (Schörner and Rendulic) too, and the German government would have to accept whatever peace terms it could get. The Führer could never do that, while no doubt a Göring could certainly accept such a peace. . .

Now to what Göring was planning: In the Führer's opinion it had been planned and prepared for some time. Before Göring drove off to the south on the afternoon of the twentieth he told Ambassador Hewel we would have to negotiate now, without fail and at any price, and he was the only one who could do it – he, Göring, was not implicated in the Nazi Party's sins, the treatment of the Church question, the concentration camps, etc. etc.; our enemies would obviously only be able to accept a man who was blameless, and had even, like Göring, condemned much of what was going on from the outset.

The text of the invitation telegrams he sent out shows, in the Führer's view, clearly enough where Göring was heading; he issued an ultimatum to be given freedom to act both domestically and abroad – he had even arranged for a radio broadcast truck to stand by. Detailed investigations are still going on.

Typically, the former Reichsmarschall has not lifted a finger to aid the Battle for Berlin since his departure, he just set about preparing his treachery. In the opinion of people here anybody else in his position would

> immediately have done all he could to display his loyalty to the Führer by the most energetic actions.
>
> Not so Göring! It's not hard to imagine what his radio broadcast would have sounded like: apart from anything else, it would have brought about the immediate and total collapse of the eastern front. Whom the Führer's going to appoint as successor will shortly be ascertained.
>
> At any rate we're staying here and holding on as long as possible. If you all can relieve us in time this will certainly be a decisive moment in the war. Because the differences of opinion between our foes are becoming more acute with every day.
>
> I personally am convinced that the Führer has once more taken the right decision. Others are less convinced or prefer to offer their counsels from safe havens. The pressure to come to Berlin and see the Führer is at present at its lowest ebb; the compulsion to go somewhere else, and to wait and see, to the accompaniment of more or less authentic-sounding excuses, is great. As for us, we'll keep to our honour and loyalty as always!

On that day the Russians had encircled Berlin and linked up with the Americans on the Elbe – without incident. But Wenck's relief attack began making progress toward Potsdam at last, and Field Marshal Schörner, whose army group had just recaptured Bautzen and Weissenberg, south of Berlin, inflicting heavy losses on the Russians, also began moving northward toward the capital. 'The attack by Schörner's army group proves,' Hitler's staff cabled to Dönitz on April 26, 'that given the will, we are still capable of beating the enemy even today.'

These distant victories glowed faintly through the thickening gloom of the communications breakdowns besetting Hitler's bunker. 'The British and Americans along the Elbe are holding back,' Hitler observed. 'If I can win through here and hang on to the capital, perhaps hope will spring in British and American hearts that with our Nazi Germany they may after all have some chance against this entire danger. And the only man capable of this is me. . . Give me one victory here – however high the price – and then I'll regain the right to eliminate the dead-weights who constantly obstruct. After that I will work with the generals who have proved their worth.' Later he again digressed on this theme. 'First I must set an example to everybody I blamed for retreating, by not retreating myself. It is possible that I will die here, but then at least I shall have died an honourable death.'

The first battalion of Dönitz's naval troops arrived. The makeshift hospital in the Voss Bunker next to Hitler's bunker filled with casualties. The government quarter was under non-stop bombardment by artillery and bombers. Weidling reported to Hitler that it was proving difficult to demolish bridges – for example along the Teltow Canal defence line – because Speer's staff had decamped with all the bridge plans. Speer had also fought against the dismantling of the bronze lampposts along the east-west Axis, to prepare an emergency landing strip. (Speer had protested: 'You seem to forget I am responsible for the reconstruction of Berlin.')

During April 26 spirits soared as the news of Wenck's approaching army and Schörner's successes trickled in. That evening General Greim limped into the shelter with a female admirer (Hanna Reitsch), having been shot in the leg as his plane made a crash-landing on the boulevard. Hitler sat at his bedside, morosely describing Göring's 'ultimatum' and the history of the Luftwaffe's failure. At ten P.M., German radio broadcast Greim's promotion to field marshal and his appointment as Göring's successor. Hitler ordered his new Luftwaffe commander to concentrate the Messerschmitt jet squadrons around Prague.

AT NIGHT he was kept awake by the shell fire and by his own vivid memories. This was Stalingrad all over again, but this time the miracle would happen. 'Imagine! Like wildfire the word spreads throughout Berlin: one of our armies has broken through from the west and restored contact with us!' How could Stalin hope to reduce a great city of four million people with only four hundred tanks, especially if fifty were being knocked out each day? 'The Russians have already exhausted their strength in crossing the Oder, particularly the northern army group [Zhukov's].'

According to Keitel, General Holste's battle group in the north-west had gained ground at Nauen and Kremmen. Hitler impatiently told Krebs, 'It's high time they got a move on!'

General Wenck's relief offensive from the south-west had already reached the Schwielow lake, and during the morning the Party announced that it had reached Potsdam, thus attaining the tactical objective laid down four days before.

At five A.M. on April 27 a big Russian push along the Hohenzollerndamm boulevard had begun. As Goebbels nervously put it: 'I keep getting this nightmare picture: Wenck is at Potsdam, and here the Russians are pouring into Potsdamer Platz!' ' – And I'm here at Potsdamer Platz, not Potsdam!'

agreed Hitler uneasily. His eyes were transfixed by the coloured arrows marking the relief armies on the map. Late on the twenty-sixth he had radioed to Jodl: 'Make it clear to Ninth Army that it is to wheel sharply north with Twelfth Army to take weight off Battle for Berlin.'

General Busse's Ninth Army – encircled south-east of Berlin – had the tanks, but its westward movement seemed designed to *bypass* Berlin to the south. Hitler was puzzled by this defiance of his orders.*

Throughout the twenty-seventh he speculated on this puzzle. 'I just don't understand the direction of its attack. Busse's driving into a complete vacuum.' Late that day, it occurred to him at last why the Ninth Army had pleaded its radio failure. 'If there's a long radio silence, it is always the sign that things are going badly.' 'It's impossible to command if every plan that's drawn up is adapted by every army commander as he sees fit.'

North of Berlin, the generals' disobedience to orders was even more blatant. Heinrici's remaining Oder sector had collapsed under the weight of Marshal Rokossovski's attack. Since noon on April 26 Heinrici had begged Jodl to allow General Steiner's two armoured divisions to repair the damage. Heinrici assured Keitel he was holding a line from Angermünde to Uckerheim, but when the field marshal set out to the battlefield he found the front line troops in the midst of a well-prepared retreat.

Keitel telephoned Hitler about Heinrici's deceit. Far from holding the line, Heinrici and Manteuffel – commanding the Third Panzer Army on the breached Oder sector – were deliberately herding their troops across Mecklenburg toward the haven of the Allied lines. At about five P.M. Jodl radiotelephoned his grim decision to Hitler: Steiner's two armoured divisions would have to be thrown northward – away from Berlin – into the Russian spearheads pursuing Manteuffel's troops.

The hysterical atmosphere created by Jodl's radiotelephone message can be judged from the words Martin Bormann jotted in his diary:

> The divisions marching to relieve us have been halted by Himmler and Jodl. We shall stand by and die with our Führer, loyal unto death. If others think they must act 'out of superior judgement,' then they are sacrificing the Führer. And their loyalty – Devil take them! – is no better than their sense of honour.

* Busse had decided to drive with his army remnants toward the American lines.

In his sprawling handwriting he also penned these hysterical lines about Heinrich Himmler: 'One might have expected that H.H., at least once he received my letter of April 25, would have addressed a fiery appeal to his SS – "SS men, our honour is our loyalty." [*The motto of the SS.*] But H.H. kept *silent!!* While Old Father Keitel drove around out there, raging and roaring to raise help for us in time, H.H. tucked himself away at Hohenlychen [*Dr. Gebhardt's clinic*]! And Steiner's SS force, which was supposed to move off first, just marched on the spot from the word go – it just play-acted – and this was the force that H.H. should have appealed to first and foremost: "SS men, rally to your Führer! For our battleflag, fluttering ahead on high, let's keep the oath we all swore, Our loyalty is our honour." No, H.H. just kept quiet. How are we to interpret that? And what are we to make of the question he radioed to General Burgdorf, whether the Führer might not be judging Göring's intentions too harshly?' Bormann's note continued:

> Obviously H.H. is wholly out of touch with the situation. If the Führer dies, how does he plan to survive!!?
>
> Again and again, as the hours tick past, the Führer stresses how tired he is of living now with all the treachery he has had to endure! Were one to ignore the heroism of even the women and children, one could only agree with the Führer. How many disappointments this man has had to suffer unto the very end.

A premature dusk had fallen over Berlin above the bunker, as smoke and dust blotted out the sun. Camouflaged by swastika pennants, four Soviet tanks had even reached Wilhelms Platz before they were detected and destroyed. 'Identification regulations are to be strictly obeyed!' Hitler ordered. The Russians announced that they were bringing up 370-millimetre and 406-millimetre mortars. Hitler handed his adjutants brass-encased cyanide capsules, to use if absolutely necessary. When the time came he would order a general breakout toward Wenck's army at Potsdam. He disclosed privately to Colonel von Below, 'Only my wife and I will stay behind.' He contrasted Eva Braun's fidelity with the gross disloyalty displayed by Göring and Himmler – whom he intuitively blamed for Steiner's disobedience.

At the late night conference, General Krebs reassured Hitler that the battle lines in Berlin itself were stable again. Hitler Youth units were holding a bridgehead south of the Pichelsdorf bridge in anticipation of Wenck's arrival; isolated trucks from Wenck's army had already broken through.

The first Russian snipers were however roaming Potsdamer Platz. Hitler pointed out: 'The subway and streetcar tunnels are a source of danger.' A ticking clock coming over the loudspeakers warned that enemy bombers were still over Germany. Hitler could hear the distant singing of the Goebbels children in sixfold chorus as they prepared for bed.

During the evening he had unpinned his own golden Party medallion and bestowed it on their red-eyed mother, Magda. She wrote: 'The thudding of shells is getting even on my nerves, but the little ones soothe their younger sisters, and their presence here is a boon to us because now and again they manage to prise a smile from the Führer.' They told 'Uncle Hitler' they were longing for the day when the new soldiers he had promised would come and drive the Russians away. For their sake Hitler hoped too, though he himself had long decided to stay. 'In this city I have had the right to command others; now I must heed the commands of Fate. Even if I could save myself here, I will not do so. The captain too goes down with his ship.'

AT THREE A.M. – it was now April 28 – Krebs telephoned Keitel at the OKW's field headquarters. 'The Führer is most anxious to know about the relief attack west of Oranienburg. What's the news? Is it making any headway? The Führer doesn't *want* Steiner to be commander there!! Hasn't Holste taken over there yet? If help doesn't reach us in the next thirty-six or forty-eight hours, it'll be too late!!!' Keitel replied that he was going to see Steiner in person.

It is unlikely that Hitler slept much that night. The chancellery was under direct and heavy shellfire. He restlessly paced the bunker passageways, gripping a Berlin street map that was disintegrating in his clammy hands. Busse's Ninth Army had at last linked up with General Wenck's Twelfth, but both were beyond the limits of exhaustion. Moreover, by 4:30 P.M. General Krebs had learned from Jodl the full extent of Heinrici's disobedience north of Berlin: the southern flank of Manteuffel's Third Panzer Army was retreating across the Schorf Heath; Steiner was covering this illicit retreat and doing nothing to seal off the breach at Prenzlau. Keitel was apoplectic with anger and instructed Heinrici and Manteuffel to meet him at a lonely crossroads to account for their actions. One thing was certain: Berlin's northern defences were wide open.

This was not the only treason. Hitler had hardly seen Himmler's SS General Fegelein during this last week. Then on April 28 his staff began receiving erratic calls from Fegelein. Hitler suspected he was absconding, and he

debated with Greim the possibility that the Reichsführer SS was condoning this – which might have sinister implications. Late that afternoon Bormann showed him a stunning news report: Allied radio had proclaimed that Himmler had contacted the United States and Britain and guaranteed them Germany's unconditional surrender!

Bormann sneered, 'I always said LOYALTY has to be stamped on your heart and not on your belt-buckle!' Fegelein's personal effects were searched and papers relating to Himmler's treachery were found, along with two money belts of Gold sovereigns and other enemy currencies. Eva Braun, whose sister had married the SS officer, mournfully noted: 'The Führer is spared nothing.' Fegelein's adjutant stated that he had last seen him changing into civilian clothes at his Kurfürstendamm apartment. Bormann cabled to his Party headquarters in Munich at eight P.M.: 'Instead of spurring on the troops to fight us free with orders and appeals, just silence from the top men. Loyalty apparently yielding to disloyalty. We remain here. Reich chancellery already in ruins.'

Two hours later General Weidling reported that the Russians were hammering Wenck's relief army into the ground. The situation in the city was desperate. Food and medical stores were exhausted. Weidling outlined his plan for a mass breakout; Hitler replied that he would not himself leave the chancellery. His naval liaison admiral radioed to Dönitz: 'We are holding on to the very end.' At midnight Keitel's telegram arrived. At the cross-roads rendezvous Heinrici had suavely promised to obey orders, but at 11:30 P.M. he admitted he had in fact ordered a further retreat; Keitel had dismissed him.

At about the same time Eva Braun was phoned by Fegelein. 'Eva, you must abandon the Führer if you can't persuade him to leave Berlin. Don't be stupid, it's a matter of life and death now!' Within the hour Fegelein had been found and brought back to the bunker, still in civilian clothes. Hitler told Bormann to hand him over to SS General Wilhelm Mohnke, to help the fight for central Berlin; but Bormann and Günsche pointed out that Fegelein would just run away again. The Führer thereupon ordered him summarily court-martialed and executed.

'Our Reich chancellery is reduced to rubble,' wrote Bormann in his diary. '"*On dagger's edge the world now stands*." Treason and treachery by Himmler – unconditional surrender – announced abroad.' Hitler saw this as the origin of Steiner's failure too. Perhaps at this very moment Himmler was plotting to kill or kidnap him? Suddenly he mistrusted the cyanide

capsules supplied by Morell's replacement, the SS surgeon Dr. Stumpfegger. He sent for Professor Werner Haase from the Voss Bunker operating theatre and ordered him to test a sample capsule on Blondi – the largest animal available in the shelter. The dog's jaws were forced open and an ampoule was crunched inside them with pliers. The dog howled briefly and then stiffened. Hitler handed out ampoules to the rest of his staff, apologising for being unable to offer them no kinder farewell gift.

MORE RUSSIAN tanks were reported massing south of Potsdamer Platz for the assault on the chancellery. While Eva Braun, Goebbels, and Hewel hastily wrote last letters to their relatives, a chalk-faced Hitler slumped on Field Marshal Greim's bed. 'Our only hope is Wenck. We must throw in every plane we've got to cover his breakthrough.' An Arado training plane had just made a brilliant landing on the shell-cratered Axis; Hitler ordered the injured Greim to betake himself to Rechlin air base to command the Luftwaffe attack – and to arrest Himmler. Bormann and Krebs signed a joint appeal to General Wenck to break through as soon as he could, so as to furnish Hitler with a basis for political manoeuvre. But Hitler himself was already writing finis: Himmler's treachery and the failure of the relief divisions left him with no desire to live on.

With the concrete membranes reverberating under the blast of Russian shells, he sent for his youngest secretary – the widowed Traudl Junge.

For a while he stood at his usual mid-table place, leaning on the now bare map-room table with both hands and staring at her shorthand pad. Suddenly he barked out: 'My Political Testament' and began dictating it, without notes – part *pièce justificative*, part pæan of praise for his brave troops' accomplishments.

'From the sacrifice of our soldiers and my own comradeship with them unto death, we have sown a seed which one day in Germany's history will blossom forth into a glorious rebirth of the National Socialist movement and thus bring about a truly united nation.'

Even dictated under stress, and without notes, the document betrayed, at least in its drafting and construction, no trace of any mental disequilibrium. Hitler formally expelled Göring and Himmler from the Party and appointed Dönitz as his own successor; Speer was also sacked. Field Marshal Schörner – 'the only man to shine as a real warlord on the entire eastern front,' Hitler had sighed a day before – was appointed Commander in Chief of the German army.

IT WAS about two A.M., April 29, 1945. Another notable event lay ahead, and this was at the forefront of Hitler's private testament, the document which he now dictated. 'During my years of struggle I believed I ought not to engage in marriage; but now my mortal span is at its end I have resolved to take as my wife the woman who came to this city when it was already virtually under siege, after long years of true friendship, to link her fate with my own. It is her wish to go with me to her death, as my wife. This will make up for all I could not give her because of my work on behalf of my people.' Hitler bequeathed his effects to the Party; or, if it no longer existed, to the state. With neat realism he added that should the state also have been destroyed 'further dispositions on my part would seem superfluous.'

Elsewhere in the shelter a small wedding party had assembled. A city official had been fetched from Goebbels's ministry as registrar, a slight, quiet-spoken man in Party uniform and a Volkssturm armband. From time to time during the funereal wedding supper Hitler left to discuss with Goebbels and Bormann the constitution of the Cabinet with which Dönitz must carry forward the war against 'the poisoner of all nations, international Jewry.' Goebbels was included as Reich Chancellor, but Goebbels warned Hitler that he would not leave Berlin. Most of the rest were 'moderates' like Seyss-Inquart, Schwerin von Krosigk, and Backe. Gauleiter Karl Hanke, still defending his embattled Breslau, was to replace Himmler as Reichsführer SS and chief of police.

Bormann, the new Party minister, was still transmitting strident messages to Dönitz at Flensburg. 'Foreign press reports fresh treason. The Führer expects you to strike like lightning and tough as steel against every traitor in north zone. Without fear or favour. Schörner, Wenck, and rest must prove their loyalty to the Führer by fastest relief of Führer. BORMANN.'

By four A.M. Frau Junge had finished typing the testaments in triplicate (her chief wanted to make certain that one copy reached the outside world). Hitler himself was still reminiscing softly with Goebbels about the exhilarating struggle for power and empire which was now approaching its end.

THEIR CONFERENCES over the next thirty-six hours were irregular and brief, for an information blackout of Stygian darkness was descending: his armies were silent, and for days he had seen no diplomatic cables. The progress of the fighting in Berlin could be followed only by ringing up telephone numbers at random. Often Russian voices answered. At noon on April 29, Jodl reported briefly that Wenck was at a standstill, and then at 12:50 P.M. the

OKW's VHF radio channel went dead. From now on the enemy news bulletins were Hitler's main source of information on his own armies. Italian radio was monitored describing the ugly scene as the bullet-riddled corpses of Mussolini, his mistress Clara Petacci, and a dozen Fascist leaders were strung up 'by their feet' – Hitler mechanically underlined the words in pencil – in a Milan square. Admiral Voss signalled from the shelter to Dönitz at four P.M.: 'All contact with army authorities outside cut off. Urgently request information on fighting outside Berlin via naval signals channel.' Krebs's aide, Captain Gerhardt Boldt, suggested that he and two fellow officers attempt to contact the Twelfth Army. Hitler willingly dispatched them. 'My regards to Wenck – and tell him to hurry, or it'll be too late!' The three sets of testaments were entrusted to three other hardy souls who were ordered to smuggle them out to Dönitz, Schörner, and the Obersalzberg. Burgdorf wrote to Schörner: 'The testament is to be published as soon as the Führer so orders or his death is confirmed.'

Heavy fighting was going on at the Anhalt railroad station. With the tattered street map in his hand, Hitler spoke to his chauffeur, Erich Kempka, who had driven him on so many historic journeys since 1933. Kempka told him his motor pool was ferrying supplies to the troops guarding the chancellery, along a perimeter from the Brandenburg Gate to Potsdamer Platz: 'Their courage is exceptional. They're waiting for General Wenck's relief columns to arrive.'

Hitler calmly responded, 'We're all waiting for Wenck.'

In his study he wrote a last letter to Keitel: the fight would soon end, and he would commit suicide; Keitel was to support Admiral Dönitz to the end. 'Many people have abused my trust in them. Disloyalty and betrayal have undermined our resistance throughout this war. This was why it was not granted to me to lead my people to victory.' He refused to believe that such great sacrifice could have been in vain. 'The aim must still be to win territory in the east for the German people.'

The Russians were pushing down Saarland Strasse and Wilhelm Strasse and they were nearly at the air ministry.

At 7:52 P.M. Hitler signalled five urgent questions to Jodl. '1. Where are Wenck's spear-heads? 2. When do they attack? 3. Where is the Ninth Army? 4. In which direction is Ninth Army breaking through? 5. Where are Holste's spearheads?'

Around the same time Bormann issued two signals. The first reflected the ugly atmosphere of the bunker, and read: 'Our own impression is in-

creasingly clear that for many days the divisions in Berlin battle zone have been marking time instead of hacking a way out for the Führer. We only receive information supervised, suppressed, or doctored by TEILHAUS [Keitel]. We can only transmit via TEILHAUS. Führer orders you to take rapid and ruthless action against all traitors.' The second signal was briefer: 'The Führer's alive and directing defence Berlin.'

AT THE last battle conference on the twenty-ninth General Weidling announced that there was heavy fighting at the nearby Potsdam Station. There were no bazookas left. A long silence followed this. Hitler wearily lifted himself from his chair and turned to go. Weidling asked what his troops should do when their ammunition ran out. Hitler replied, 'Your men will have to break out in small groups.' He restated this in a message to Weidling and Mohnke during the night. Soon after, he received Keitel's telegram replying to his four questions. It left no hope whatever that Berlin would be relieved: '1. Wenck's spearhead is stalled south of Schwielow lake. 2. Twelfth Army is therefore unable to continue attack to Berlin. 3. Bulk of Ninth Army encircled. 4. Holste's Corps forced onto defensive.'

At Eva's suggestion, all the women in the chancellery shelters – refugees fleeing the Russians, nurses from the Voss Bunker hospital, cooks, and officers' wives – were brought to one of the passages. His eyes bleary and unseeing, Hitler went and shook hands with them and spoke a few words in a low voice to each. One of the nurses began a hysterical speech, insisting that the Führer would bring them victory after all, but Hitler brusquely silenced her. 'One must accept one's fate like a man.'

He had taken a deliberate gamble by staying in Berlin; he knew it; and his gamble had failed.

BY MORNING on April 30, 1945, he had decided to die at three P.M. He shaved and dressed as punctiliously as ever, donning the olive-green shirt, black shoes, socks, and trousers for the last time. He sent for Bormann and then for Otto Günsche. He told them that he and his wife would commit suicide that afternoon; Günsche was to ensure that both were really dead – by delivering coups de grâce if necessary – and then burn both bodies to ashes. 'I would not want my body put on display in some waxworks in the future.'

His bunker was to remain intact. 'I want the Russians to realise that I stayed here to the very last moment.' Magda Goebbels sank to her knees

and pleaded with him to stay, but he gently raised her and explained that his death was necessary to remove the last obstacle in Dönitz's path, if Germany was to be saved.

His female staff was assembled, and a last lunch was taken together. When he walked through the bunker for the last time to say farewell, accompanied by Eva, he probably noticed a handful of officers of his escort waiting with two stretchers near the exit staircase.

It was about three-thirty when Hitler and Eva withdrew into the little green-and-white tiled study. He closed the double doors, sealing out all sounds but the murmur of the ventilation plant and the echoing explosion of shells. Eva sat on the narrow couch, kicked off her shoes, and swung her legs up onto the faded blue and white upholstery beside her. Hitler sat next to her, with his mother's photograph to his right and the portrait of Frederick the Great frowning down in front of him.

They unscrewed the brass casings and extracted the thin glass phials with their amber liquid content. Eva sank her head on his shoulder and bit the glass. Her knees drew up sharply in agony. Controlling his trembling hand with difficulty, Adolf Hitler raised the 7·65-millimetre Walther PPK to his right temple, clenched his teeth on the phial in his mouth, and squeezed the trigger.

Watched by silent crowds of Berliners, Soviet troops march the last defenders of the capital off to a captivity from which most will never return.



Author's Notes

ABBREVIATIONS USED

AA	Auswärtiges Amt. For a listing of 'serials' against NA microfilm numbers, see George A. Kent, *A Catalog of Files and Microfilms of the German Foreign Ministry Archives 1920–1945*, iii, pages 525 *et seq*.
ADI(K)	British Air Ministry's Assistant Directorate of Intelligence, interrogation and captured documents section
AL/	File number assigned by CO (Cabinet Office) Enemy Documents Section; document now in IWM (Imperial War Museum, London)
BA	Bundesarchiv, the German federal archives, based at the time of my research in Koblenz (civil agencies) and Freiburg (military)
BDC	Berlin Document Center (of U.S. Mission, Berlin)
–C	A Nuremberg Document series (*e.g.*, 100-C)
CAB	Cabinet File (in British Public Records Office)
CCPWE	U.S. Army Interrogation series (now in NA)
CIC	Counter Intelligence Corps of the U.S. Army
CIOS	Combined Intelligence Objectives Survey
CIR	Consolidated Interrogation Report (U.S. Army)
CO	Cabinet Office files
CSDIC	Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Center
D–	Nuremberg document series
DJ–	Author's personal microfilm series
DBFP	*Documents on British Foreign Policy*
DDI	*Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*
DGFP	*Documents on German Foreign Policy*
DIC	Detailed Interrogation Center (see CSDIC)
DIS	Detailed Interrogation Summary (U.S. Army)
EC–	A Nuremberg Document series
ED–	An IfZ document series
ETHINT	European Theater Interrogation (U.S. Army series)
F–	An IfZ document series
FA	Forschungsamt, literally Research Office: Göring's wiretap and SigInt agency, of which see my history, *Das Reich hört mit* (Kiel, 1989)

FD– Foreign Documents, a British series of unpublished captured documents, currently held by Imperial War Museum, London
FDRL Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (Hyde Park, NY)
FIAT Field Intelligence Agency, Technical
FIR Final Interrogation Report (U.S. Army interrogation)
FO Foreign Office, London
FRUS *Foreign Relations of the United States*
GB– British documentary exhibit at Nuremberg
GRGG CSDIC document series
II H– German army document, in BA, Freiburg
HL Hoover Library (Stanford, Ca.)
IfZ Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Institute of Contemporary History, Munich
IIR Interim Interrogation Report (U.S. Army interrogation)
IMT International Military Tribunal: *Trial of the Major German War Criminals at Nuremberg*
IWM Imperial War Museum, London
Kl. Erw. *Kleine Erwerbung*, a minor accession by BA, Koblenz
Ktb *Kriegstagebuch*, war diary of a German operational unit
L– A Nuremberg document series
46–M Interrogations at Berchtesgaden, 1945, now in library of University of Pennsylvania
MA– IfZ microfilm series
MD Milch Documents, original RLM files since restituted by the British government to BA, Freiburg; microfilms of them are available from Imperial War Museum, London, and from NA too (e.g., the citation MD.64/3456 refers to volume 64, page 3456)
MGFA Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, German defence ministry historical research section in Freiburg
MI Military Intelligence branch (British)
MISC Military Intelligence Service Center (U.S. Army interrogations)
ML/ NA microfilm series
N *Nachlass* – the papers of a German military personage, now held by BA, Freiburg
NA National Archives, Washington, DC
ND Nuremberg Document
NCA *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression* (U.S. publication of selected Nuremberg documents)

NC–	A Nuremberg document series
NO–	A Nuremberg document series
NOKW–	A Nuremberg document series
NS	Collection of Nazi documents in BA, Koblenz
OCMH	Office of the Chief of Military History, Washington, DC
ONI	Office of Naval Intelligence
O.Qu.	*Oberquartiermeister*, Quartermaster
OUSCC	Office of U.S. Chief of Counsel (IMT)
P–	MS series of U.S. Army: postwar writings of German officers in prison camps (complete collection in NA)
PG/	Files of German admiralty, now held by BA, Freiburg
PID	Political Intelligence Division of the FO
PRO	Public Record Office, London
–PS	A Nuremberg document series
R–	A Nuremberg document series (*e.g.* R-100)
R	Collections of Reich documents in BA, Koblenz (*e.g.* R.43 II/606)
RG	Record Group (of NA)
RH	German army document in BA, Freiburg
RIR	Reinterrogation Report (U.S. Army)
SAIC	U.S. Seventh Army Interrogation Center
SIR	CSDIC document series
SRGG	CSDIC document series
T	NA microfilm series (e.g., T78/300/1364 refers to Microcopy T78, roll 300, page 1364)
USAMHI	U.S. Army Military History Institute (Carlisle, Pa.)
USFET	U.S. Forces, European Theatre
USSBS	U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey
VfZ	*Vierteljahrsheft für Zeitgeschichte*, quarterly published by IfZ
WR	*Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau*, German military science monthly journal
X–	OCMH document series, now in NA
X–P	DIC interrogation series (prisoners' conversations, recorded by hidden microphones, as at CSDIC)
YIVO	Yivo Archives for Jewish Research (New York, NY)
ZS	Zeugenschrift, collection by IfZ of written and oral testimonies
ZSg.	*Zeitungs-Sammlung*, newspaper cuttings collection in BA, Koblenz
ZStA	Zentrales Staatsarchiv (Potsdam, Germany)

NOTES AND SOURCES

We have deposited our Adolf Hitler research files in the Irving Collection at the Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich, Germany. Most of them can be seen without restriction. The principal items are available on our microfilm from Microform Ltd (see page 21.)

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page ix Hugh Trevor-Roper (Lord Dacre) emphasised Hitler's single-mindedness in foreign policy, in a paper read in Munich in November 1959 (*VfZ*, 1960, 121ff). See also Karl Bracher's article on Hitler's early foreign policy (*VfZ*, 1957, 63ff), and Hitler, *Das Zweite Buch* (Stuttgart, 1961).

page xvii The still-closed Allen Dulles files on the Ciano diaries, 1944–1969, are Nos. 20, 21, 23, 48, and 170 (Princeton Univ. library).

page xxiii Hitler's ancestry: the propaganda ministry repeatedly forbade any kind of press speculation on this, *e.g.*, in December 1939 (HL, Hans Fritzsche papers).

page xxiv Noted American journalist Louis Lochner visited one concentration camp in May 1933, and wrote to his daughter that the prisoners were treated humanely, but that they were being held without judicial procedure (Lochner papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.)

page xxvi The Goebbels diary references are from the entries for Sep 19, 21, Oct 1, 1935.

page 1 The police reports are reproduced in *VfZ*, 1963, 274ff. The speech in Salzburg in August 1930 (page 2) will be found in BA file NS.11/28. For two more early speeches on the Jews in Vienna, in December 1921 and Jun 1922, see *VfZ*, 1966, 207f.

page 3 Gerd Heidemann provided the transcript of Hitler's remarks to Scharrer from his remarkable collection.

page 8 The revealing quotation is from Hitler's secret speech to his generals, Jun 22, 1944 (BA file NS.26/51).

page 13 The OCMH team under Georg Shuster conducted a series of perceptive interrogations of leading Germans including Schacht, Dönitz, Schwerin von Krosigk and Ribbentrop in 1945: these give much frank information on these early years (copies in Irving Collection, IfZ).

page 13 The letters of Walther Hewel from Landsberg are in his widow's possession: microfilm of Hewel's diaries and papers, Irving Collection, IfZ.

page 14 Robert Ley wrote several manuscripts in his Nuremberg cell before committing suicide in October 1945. The Nuremberg authorities ordered them destroyed, but they fortunately became lodged in Robert H. Jackson's files instead (NA, RG..238, Jackson files, Box 181). My microfilm of them, DJ–79, is in the Irving Collection, IfZ.

See also Ley's interrogation on May 29, 1945 (SAIC/30) and an East German's view in *VfZ*, 1970, 443ff. The US embassy sent a 112-pp. report on the Labour Front to President Roosevelt in August 1938, stressing the Front's 'belief that the state has an obligation to make the life of the workman richer and fuller.' Roosevelt wrote to the embassy:

'All of this helps us in planning' (FDRL, PSF box 45, Germany).

page 15 On the history of the autobahn, I was fortunate to obtain access to the Fritz Todt family papers and diaries (still restricted); and I used Shuster's interrogation of Dorsch. See too Dorsch's paper of Mar 8, 1950, in BA file Kl. Erw. 529/2.

page 15 Relying partly on Elke Fröhlich's monumental transcription of the diaries of Dr. Joseph Goebbels and on other archival sources, and being the first western historian to retrieve the Goebbels diaries from the microfiches held in the former Soviet secret state archives in Moscow, I wrote a biography of Hitler's propaganda minister, *Goebbels. Mastermind of the Third Reich* (Focal Point, London, 1996) as a companion volume to my studies of Milch, Hess, Rommel, and Göring.

The entries of Feb 3 and 6, 1933, reveal Goebbels's silent fury at being left out of Hitler's initial Cabinet. As for the mysterious fire that destroyed the Reichstag building on the night of Feb 27–8, 1933, the private diary note made by Goebbels on Feb 28, 1933 (on the microfiche of Feb 16 – May 1, 1933, which I first reviewed in the Moscow archives in 1992) proves that the conflagration took Hitler and himself totally by surprise; see too Goebbels's diary for Apr 9, 1941, written after a talk with Hitler about the fire.

page 15 Oron J. Hale, in *The Captive Press in the Third Reich* (Princeton University Press, 1964) wrote the definitive history of Nazi press monopoly. I also used the Cabinet records (BA, R.43 I/1459), Shuster's interrogation of Eugen Maier and Max Amann, and Seventh Army interrogations of Amann and Hans Heinrich Hinkel. For the loan from Epp, see his papers (T84/24/9692).

page 16 The birth of the SS and police state: see Shuster's interrogations of Frick and Göring, July 1945. Himmler's letter of May 18, 1937 is on T175/40/0962f; Heydrich's letter to Himmler, May 23, 1939, is in BDC file 238/I.

My transcript of Himmler's notes is in the Irving Collection, IfZ.

page 16 For a review of the Nazi Forschungsamt wiretapping agency, see my biography *Göring* (New York & London, 1989); I have also published a history of the FA, *Das Reich hört mit* (Arndt Verlag, Kiel, 1989, reissued 1999); revising my earlier documentation on the FA, *Breach of Security* (London, 1968), the later work is based on my interviews with FA staff, on the manuscript ZS. 1734 in IfZ files by Ulrich Kittel, a senior FA official, on interrogations of Göring, Steengracht, Ribbentrop, and Schapper, and on the OSS historical file on the FA, XE 4986 (NA, RG.226).

page 17 Hitler's relationship to Hindenburg is described by Lammers under SAIC and USFET interrogation. See also Hitler's letter to the president, Apr 5, 1933 (T81/80/2044f).

page 18 Hitler's secret speech of Feb 3, 1933 is the most important proof that his foreign policy remained constant from 1933 to 1941. Mellenthin's record is in IfZ files; I also used Liebmann's notes and Raeder's version, in his manuscript on Hitler and the Party (in Robert H. Jackson's files).

page 20 On the founding of the secret Luftwaffe, I used Milch's papers and

diaries and Cabinet records. See my book, *The Rise and Fall of the Luftwaffe* (London & New York, 1973); and the German official histories by Karl-Heinz Völker, *Die deutsche Luftwaffe 1933–1939* (Stuttgart, 1967) and *Dokumente und Dokumentarfotos zur Geschichte der deutschen Luftwaffe* (Stuttgart, 1968).

page 20 Raeder's study on German naval policy 1933–1945 is in Jackson's files (NA); see also his Nuremberg interrogation, Nov 9, 1945, and particularly the wartime German studies by navy historian Dr. Treue (BA files PG/33965a and 33966a): these quote many pre-war documents no longer traceable. A good guide to the documentation is James Hine Belota's 1954 Ph.D. thesis, University of California: my microfilm of this, DJ–47, in Irving Collection, IfZ.

page 20 Hitler's command is quoted in Fritz Todt's letter to Oberbaurat Koester, 14 Nov 1936 (Todt papers).

page 21 Quotations from the Ribbentrop files, see pages xxii-xxiii.

page 21 On the decision to pull out of the League, see Ian Kershaw's informative discussion in *Hitler: 1889 – 1936* at pages 490–493.

page 24 On the growing tension between SA and regular army, I used Fritsch's and Liebmann's paper published by Klaus-Jürgen Müller in *Das Heer und Hitler* (Stuttgart, 1969): also Weichs's manuscript (N.19/6) – he had been Fritsch's chief of staff for one year.

Papers in Krüger's files (T580/265) have a Mar 1934 marginal note by Krüger indicating that he believed the Abwehr was conniving against the SA.

page 26 The quoted passage is from Vormann's manuscript (IfZ, F34); Keitel and many other army generals have testified that the SA was stockpiling illegal weapons: on which see the evidence in Wehrkreis VII file 1652 (BA).

page 26 Eduard Wagner's letters are available on our microfilm (see page 12).

page 27 The journalist was Bella Fromm. Her typescript diary is in the Mugar Memorial Library, Boston University. The role of the FA was confirmed to the author by Dr. Gerhard Neuenhoff, and by a BAOR report in XE 4986 (see note to page 16). Göring told Milch that he had sent Körner with the 'the final bits of evidence against Röhm & Co., probably mostly wiretaps,' according to Milch's manuscript written at Kaufbeuren on Sep 1, 1945.

page 27 I first exploited the Goebbels diary microfiche on the Röhm putsch and Dollfuss murder in the Moscow archives in 1992; see my *Goebbels. Mastermind of the Third Reich* (London, 1996), pages 193f.

page 27 In the archives of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Bonn is a lengthy hand-written 'Diary of Viktor Lutze beginning with the ill-starred Jun 30, 1934,' which Dr. Ulrich Cartarius had partially transcribed at the time he kindly allowed me access to it.

I suspect that Lutze, who was killed in a 1943 motor accident, retrospectively wrote it up from early 1936.

page 29 The most important items from Wehrkreis VII file 1652 (BA) have been published and analysed by Klaus-Jürgen Müller in *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen*, 1968, 107ff. I also used Milch's diary, notebook and unpublished memoirs; papers from the 'Röhm Trial,' Munich, May 1957; Shuster's interrogations of Göring and Frick, July

1945, and of Buch by CCPWE-32.

page 30 On Schleicher's murder, see Theodor Eschenburg's paper in *VfZ*, 1953, 71ff.

page 30 Hans Frank afterwards boasted that he had staged a sit-in at the Stadelheim prison, which he controlled as Bavarian minister of justice, to prevent the arbitrary execution of '240 more' SA men 'without trial,' as he later protested to Hitler. Hitler rebuked Frank, 'You only became minister by default.' The SS later rued that their captives had ended up in Stadelheim instead of being turned over to Himmler's tender mercies. On Dec 31, 1934 Frank was dismissed from the Bavarian justice ministry and became a Reich minister without portfolio (USFET-MISC interrogation 01/X-P.26, dated Sep 12, 1945).

page 31 Hitler's anger at the unnecessary murders is described in Julius Schaub's private papers, in the Irving Collection, IfZ. Wilhelm Brückner also described this in several affidavits and drafts for the Traunstein police in 1952 (*ibid.*). For the report of Lutze's 'drunken meanderings' see Himmler's files, T175/33/1892ff. Lutze's version is credibly supported by Ley in a long typescript, 'Thoughts on the Führer,' written in summer 1945 (Jackson papers, copy in Irving Collection, IfZ). For a list of 83 victims, see T81/80/3456ff. On July 16, 1934 Goebbels recorded: 'Terrible! A lot of things happened that did not entirely accord with the Führer's will. Fate! Victims of the revolution!'

page 32 Hindenburg's sympathetic comment was known by Kempka (Shuster interrogation), by Funk (see Henry Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche*, Stuttgart, 1963, 405) and by Brückner (a memo dated May 1949).

page 33 Adam relates this episode in his own secret memoirs (IfZ, ED109). On the Dollfuss murder, see Helmuth Auerbach's article in *VfZ*, 1964, 201 *et seq.*; I also used Papen's (monitored) conversation on May 7, 1945 (X-P.3) and Shuster interrogations of Seyss-Inquart in July 1945. The Austrian historian Dr. Ludwig Jedlicka has also published important documents of the SS, dredged up from Lake Schwarzensee in Czechoslovakia in 1964, in *Der 25. Juli 1934 im Bundeskanzleramt in Wien* (Vienna, 1965); to which I add the 1934 Goebbels diaries, see my *Goebbels. Mastermind of the Third Reich*, pages 184f.

page 35 On relations between the Wehrmacht and SS, Walther Huppenkothen – a Gestapo official – wrote illuminating studies which are in the BDC's special Canaris file. I also used Fritsch's papers and a manuscript by General Edgar Röhricht on Himmler's fight for military power, dated Mar 1946 (IfZ).

page 35 Goebbels noted on Dec 15, 1934: 'He thus seems to be assuming the worst. I am very downcast. . . We've got to find a good doctor. The Führer must be brought back to good health. The people around the Führer are too easygoing.'

page 36 There is reference to Hitler's speech of Jan 3, 1935 in the diaries of Leeb, Goebbels, and Milch; the fullest recollections of it are those of Raeder (Aug 1945), Admiral Hermann Boehm (IfZ: ZS.12) and Dr. Werner Best (Mar 1949, IfZ). Best's diary is in the Royal Danish archives, according to British

archival sources, but is not available to historians.

page 36 Beck's papers (N.28).

page 36 Blomberg's important directive of July 10, 1935 is not found, but adequately paraphrased in Fritsch's order of Mar 3, 1936 (naval files, AA serial 9944, page E.695952ff). See Donald Watt's convincing argument on this in *Journal of Contemporary History* Oct 1966, 193ff; and Goebbels's diaries.

page 37 Hitler's remark on May 25, 1935 is reported by Raeder's adjutant, Captain Schulte-Mönting, IMT, xiv, 337; see also Shuster's interrogations of Dönitz and Raeder, and Wolfgang Malanowski's paper in *WR*, 1955, 408ff. For a history of the German admiralty, 1935–1941, see Michael Salewski, *Die deutsche Seekriegsleitung 1935–1945*, Bd. I (Frankfurt M., 1970), and – specifically from Hitler's viewpoint – the monograph published by his naval adjutant Rear-Admiral Karl-Jesco von Puttkamer, *Die unheimliche See* (Munich, 1952).

page 38 Eicken's medical notes were microfilmed: NA special film ML/131. I also used a British interrogation of Eicken, and papers by Schaub.

page 40 Goebbels noted Hitler's prophecies of a United States of Europe and about the coming wars in his diary entries of May 30 and Jun 9, 1936.

page 41 Körner's letter was to State-Secretary Herbert Backe. Frau Ursula Backe, the latter's widow, made her husband's letters and private papers available to me.

As for Hitler's Aug 1936 memorandum, see Professor Wilhelm Treue's excellent study, printing this document, in *VfZ*, 1955, 184ff. Hitler briefly referred to it in his Table Talk on Jan 24, 1942. For the Cabinet (Ministerrat) session of Sep 4, 1936 see ND, 416–EC.

page 41 Milch's records, now in the BA, are important for the origins of the Legion Condor. I also used Shuster's interrogations of Warlimont and Göring.

page 41 For Göring's comments see ND, 3474–PS.

page 43 The German tax officials' association, the *Bund deutscher Steuerbeamten*, issued a booklet on fifty years of tax reform, *Fünfzig Jahre deutsche Steuerfachverwaltung* (Düsseldorf, undated), which had an amusing chapter on Hitler's delinquent tax affairs at pages 53 *et seq*. For his *Who's Who* entry see the chancellery file, 'Personal Affairs of Adolf Hitler' (R.43 II/960); the quotation is from his speech to field marshals and generals on Jan 27, 1944 (BA, Schumacher collection, 365).

page 44 In his manuscript Von Below describes Hitler's growing interest in Japan. A first-rate source is Shuster's interrogation of Dr. Werner von Schmieden, who headed the Far East division of the AA.

page 45 For Hitler's early warmth of feeling toward Britain, see *e.g.*, G. Schubert, *Anfänge nationalsozialistischer Aussenpolitik* (Cologne, 1963) for the period 1922–1923; and the little-known article by Hitler in the monthly, *Deutschlands Erneuerung*, 1924, 199ff (on which *cf.* Wolfgang Horn in *VfZ*, 1968, 280ff). In his interrogations and manuscripts Ribbentrop dwelt at length on his endeavours to cement Anglo-German friendship: of particular interest is his manuscript of Aug 2, 1945, found among Robert Jackson's papers (NA),

of which I have placed a transcript in the Irving Collection, IfZ. Ribbentrop frequently referred to his 1936 offer of an alliance to Britain: and so did Hitler, *e.g.*, on Aug 31, 1944 (Helmut Heiber, *Hitler's Lagebesprechungen 1942–1945* [Stuttgart, 1962], 614).

page 46 For Hitler's references to Lloyd George's remark, see his speeches of May 30, 1942 (Picker, *op. cit.*, 503) and Jan 27, 1944, and Table Talk of Jul 18, 1942.

page 46 Mackenzie-King's diary note, Jun 29, 1937: Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa: MG26/J.13.

page 47 See the Goebbels diaries, Feb 23, May 3, 26, 1937 and Sep 18, 1938, for Hitler's ambition to undo the humiliation of the Peace of Westphalia.

page 47 The quotation is from Hitler's secret speech to Nazi editors on Nov 10, 1938, transcribed, Feb 1940, in BA file NS11/28; a different transcript was published in *VfZ*, 1958, 175ff and the speech is summarised by Rudolf Likus in Ribbentrop's files (AA serial 43, 29044ff).

page 47 Hitler's agents like Keppler and his assistant Dr. Edmund Veesenmayer deserve much closer attention than they have been afforded by historians; they exercised greater immediate influence on foreign policy and events than Neurath, Ribbentrop, and the diplomats. I obtained all possible interrogations of them (US State Department, OCMH, Shuster, and Nuremberg) and studied their BDC personnel files too.

page 48 Beneš as a 'crafty, squinty-eyed little rat': Goebbels diary, Feb 16.

page 49 There is material on the iron and steel shortage of 1937 in Milch's and naval staff files and the Jodl diary. For the raw-materials origin of the Hossbach Conference, see Milch files, MD.53/867, 53/849, 65/7510.

page 49 François-Poncet reported on the Hossbach Conference in two cypher telegrams, Nos. 4409–10, on Nov 6, 1937 (unpublished); that the FA decoded these is evident from correspondence between Blomberg, Raeder, Puttkamer and Wangenheim in naval staff files (PG/33272).

page 49 An authentic but evidently incomplete note on the Hossbach Conference of Nov 5, 1937 exists, written on Nov 10 (ND, 386–PS). There has been controversy as to its authenticity: *e.g.*, Walter Bussmann in *VfZ*, 1968, 373ff. I am satisfied with it, as Hitler's adjutants (Below, Puttkamer) told me they saw it at the time; it is also mentioned in Jodl's diary, and in Beck's horrified commentary of Nov 12 (BA, N.28/4), and indirectly in the Wehrmacht directive of Dec 7, 1937. Other useful arguments on it: Kielmansegg, in *VfZ*, 1960, 268ff; and Hermann Gackenholz, *Reichskanzlei 5 Nov 1937* (Berlin, 1958), 459ff. It is to be noted that there is no acceptable evidence of any opposition by Fritsch either at this conference or later. He did not even mention the conference in his private papers. Alan Bullock, in *Hitler, a Study in Tyranny*, describes a dramatic row between Hitler and Fritsch on Nov 9: it must have been a loud one, because Fritsch spent the day in Berlin and Hitler was in Munich.

page 50 The letter from the naval commandant, Captain Schüssler, to Raeder is dated Jun 26, 1937 (BA, PG/33273). On Jan 10, 1944, the Admiral speculated that Hitler had decided quite early to square accounts with the USSR,

primarily for Weltanschauung reasons. 'In 1937 or 1938 he did hint that he intended to eliminate the Russians as a Baltic power; they would then have to be diverted towards the Persian Gulf.' (PG/33954b).

page 50 The speech of Nov 23, 1937 is on BA discs F5/EW.68,368–68,400.

page 50 Lord Halifax's diary contains a graphic account of his meeting with Hitler: Borthwick Institute, York University; and PRO, FO.371/20736.

page 51 Ribbentrop's long letter to Hitler, A.5522 dated Dec 27, 1937, is in the British FO library: it seems to have been handed by Ribbentrop as a carbon copy to Montgomery in May 1945 to ensure it was brought immediately to public attention. Quite the reverse happened: it vanished from sight until recently. I have supplied transcripts to the AA, the IfZ and BA.

page 51 A misdated and unsigned summary of Hitler's speech on Jan 21, 1938 is in BA file RH.26–10/255. Milch noted in his diary, 'Three-hour speech by Führer to Reich war ministry. Tremendous!' And Jodl, 'At the end of the National-Political course the Führer speaks two and a half hours to the generals on his views on history, politics, the nation and its unity, religion and the future of the German people.'

page 53 Blomberg's own surviving accounts of this affair are his manuscript for the US Seventh Army, SAIC FIR/46 of Sep 13, 1945, and unpublished jottings in his family's possession, since transcribed by Elke Fröhlich of IfZ. I also used the diaries of Alfred Jodl and Wolf Eberhard; the latter officer was Keitel's adjutant 1936-1939. Microfilm (DJ–74) and my transcript of the Eberhard diary are in the Irving Collection, IfZ. Of secondary value were interrogations of Karl Wolff, Meissner, Keitel, Wiedemann, Bodenschatz, Puttkamer, Count von der Goltz, Frau Charlotte von Brauchitsch, Canstein, Siewert, Engel and Lammers; the unpublished memoirs of Hitler's Luftwaffe adjutant Below, written in 1946; and the diaries of Göring deputy, Erhard Milch (of which I have deposited transcripts and microfilm, DJ–56, 57, 58 and 59, in the Irving Collection, IfZ).

page 55 The 'Buff Folder,' the police file on Fräulein Gruhn, survives as No. 7079 in the archives of the Berlin public prosecutor. It contains no evidence of a criminal record or of morals charges. From the testimonies of Miklas and Löwinger in the file, it is possible to reconstruct how she was entrapped. I visited her in West Berlin in 1970, but she was not willing to be interviewed.

page 55 Fritsch's personal hand-written notes composed between Feb 1938 and Sep 27, 1938 were removed to Moscow in 1945 from the Potsdam army archives, and were kindly made available to me by Lev Bezymenski. I deposited transcripts with the BA–MA, Fritsch Collection, N.33/22 and the Irving Collection, IfZ. Their authenticity was confirmed to me by Fritsch's adjutant, Colonel Otto-Heinz Grosskreutz. Of supporting interest were Fritsch's private letters to the Baroness Margot von Schutzbar, of which the originals are in the Wheeler-Bennett collection at St. Anthony's College, Oxford; and the Feb 1939 manuscripts of Fritz Wiedemann, Hitler's ex-adjutant, in the Library of Congress, Box 604 (see my transcript in the Irving

Collection, IfZ).

page 59 Fritsch was interrogated by the Gestapo's Dr. Werner Best and Franz Josef Huber on Jan 27, 1938. The 83-page verbatim record – on NA microfilm T82/272 – quotes the Fritsch dossier extensively, as do his own notes.

page 62 Other biographers have without exception dated this speech by Hitler on Feb 4, 1938: but Fritsch's notes, the diaries of Milch, Eberhard, and the later Field Marshal von Leeb make clear that it was on the fifth. The best summaries are those by Liebmann (IfZ, ED.1), Felmy, Adam, Weichs, Hoth, and Guderian.

page 63 Heitz described his meeting with Hitler and Himmler on various occasions, *e.g.*, to Weichs, Viebahn, and von der Goltz; he himself died in Soviet captivity.

page 66 I base my account of Hitler's speech winding-up the Fritsch affair on Jun 13, 1938, on Fritsch's notes, on the letters written by Halder and Karl-Heinrich von Stülpnagel to Beck on Jun 14 and 15 (N.28/3), on the diaries of Milch and Eberhard, and on the written recollections of Liebmann, Below, Adam, Felmy, Judge-Advocate Rosenberg and General von Sodenstern.

page 67 Hess's letters to his parents were intercepted and copied by British Intelligence (FO.371/26566). His widow Ilse allowed me exclusive access to the rest.

page 68 Todt's remark is in a letter to Dietrich, July 15, 1937 (family papers).

page 70 Letters listing films shown to Hitler and his comments are in his personal office (Adjutantur) files, *e.g.*, NS.10/48.

page 70 The events leading up to the Führer's meeting with Schuschnigg were exhaustively examined in *Der Hochverratsprozess gegen Dr. Guido Schmidt* (Vienna, 1947), which contains documents and illuminating testimony from Schmidt, Hornbostel, Tauschitz and others. Apart from the countless interrogations of Papen (*e.g.*, X-P.3), Keppler, Veesenmayer and Dirksen, I found the unpublished 1938 Goebbels diary and Austrian documents captured in 1938 by the Nazis invaluable: AA, serial 2935.

page 70 In his interrogations, *e.g.*, by the US State Department and at Nuremberg, Neurath gave specious reasons for his dismissal as foreign minister.

page 71 Ribbentrop was thus described by Stülpnagel to Vormann (IfZ, F34). He attracted few friends, but in private some diplomats still spoke kindly of him to me – for instance Hasso von Etzdorf, a post-war ambassador to the U.K., who mentioned several positive qualities to me. In view of Weizsäcker's bitter hostility to him, as a professional diplomat, the references in his diary need taking with a pinch of salt: I suspect that some – written on loose sheets – were interpolated by Weizsäcker years later.

Ribbentrop told Shuster in July 1945, 'It was my sole function as foreign minister to execute the Führer's foreign policy by diplomatic means.' He wrote the same to Himmler on Sep 6, 1942 (T175/117/2473). In addition to the important Ribbentrop files mentioned on page xxii, researchers should consult file XE.000887 on Ribbentrop released by Fort Meade (NA, RG.319).

page 72 Reinhard Spitzy, Ribbentrop's secretary, gave me an eye-witness account of the Berghof meeting. Minister

Guido Zernatto's account of these events, published in *Candide* as 'The Last Days of Austria,' will be found usefully in Ambassador von Mackensen's papers (AA, serial 100, 65372ff).

page 72 On the Hamburg suspension bridge project, there is an informative letter in Todt's papers from him to Major-General Hermann von Hanneken, Apr 1, 1939 ('The Führer has expressed the wish that work should begin this year'). Test drilling was complete, but a petroleum wharf would have to be moved to make way for the southern pylon and bridge pier.

page 73 Further evidence that Hitler planned no *immediate* action on Austria is implicit in a letter from his special agent Keppler to Himmler, dated Mar 7, 1938: '. . . May I remind you that you were going to submit proposals as to which officers you considered best suited for the exchange with Austria' (Himmler files, T175/32). See too Goebbels's 1938 diary, a complete transcript of which I published and annotated as *Der unbekannte Dr. Goebbels* (Focal Point, London, 1995).

page 74 Wilson's letter is in Roosevelt's files (FDRL, PSF box 45, Germany). For Chamberlain's report to the Foreign Policy Committee, see DBFP, xix, No. 465. Henderson's offical report is instructive: 'England,' he had argued to Hitler, 'had declared her readiness to clear up the difficulties, and she now put the question to Germany whether she too on her side is ready.' On the colonies, Hitler rightly challenged whether Belgium and Portugal, currently administering them, had even been consulted. He added that he 'could easily wait for six, eight, or ten years' for colonies – Germany was not interested in colonial expansion, he said. This was hardly the attitude of a state wishing to 'rule the world' or challenge the British Empire. Henderson reported to the British Cabinet that it 'was clearly not colonies which interested Hitler.' See too Henderson, *Failure of a Mission*, page 116.

page 75 The OKW study of Mar 7, 1938, drafted by Beck but signed by Brauchitsch, is in naval file PG/33311. Hitler's reaction is in Keitel's memoirs.

page 78 The 1945 interrogations of Glaise-Horstenau, and above all his conversation with Ribbentrop's aide Likus on Apr 20, 1938 (AA files, serial 43, 28926ff) provide most of the narrative. My timing of events is based on the diaries of Goebbels, Bormann, Eberhard, and Jodl, on the FA reports (2949–PS) and post-war interrogations of Göring, Papen, Keppler, Wiedemann, and the police general von Grolmann.

page 80 Hitler's anxiety about Mussolini's reaction is plain from the FA's record of his phone conversation with Prince Philipp of Hesse, his courier to Rome, on Mar 11, 1938 (2949–PS). On Mar 12, Jodl noted in his diary, 'Schörner [commanding a Mountain Corps] is pushed forward to the Italian frontier.' In a letter to the OKW on 28 Mar, Keitel mentioned that Hitler was asking whether the three mountain divisions 'are adequate for an initial defence of our southern frontier and to what extent they are to be reinforced by frontier guards' (PG/33274). I have put a transcript of Jodl's unpublished diary Mar 11–18, 1938, in my collection, IfZ. For a facsimile of Hitler's letter to Mussolini, see T. R. Emesen, *Aus Görings*

Schreibtisch (East Berlin, 1947).

page 80 On the nocturnal phone calls to Hitler, see Weizsäcker's letter to his mother, Mar 13, 1938: 'The last days were pretty hectic. Even at night – *i.e.*, on Mar 11/12 – Marianne got little sleep as my phone never stopped ringing.' Most of the calls came from Vienna, as Weizsäcker recalled on Mar 26: 'After Seyss-Inquart was successfully installed, he represented that it would be superfluous and undesirable for German troops to march in. During the night of Mar 11–12 I passed on these representations, in part, supported by our chargé d'affaires [in Vienna] von Stein, by General Muff [the military attaché] and by the C.-in-C. of the army, General von Brauchitsch; but nobody in the Reich chancellery would listen.'

Since I wrote this work, the Weizsäcker papers have been published by Professor Leonidas Hill (Berlin, 1974). There is little excuse for past historians (A.J.P. Taylor, Alan Bullock, Joachim Fest, John Toland) to have ignored them.

page 80 Viebahn's nervous breakdown is described in Jodl's unpublished diary, and in the unpublished part of Keitel's memoirs too.

page 81 That Hitler only decided on *Anschluss* when actually in Linz is proven by entries in the diaries of Weizsäcker (Mar 26, 1938) and Milch, and by the testimony of Keitel, Keppler, Milch, and the secretary of the Austrian legation in Berlin, Johannes Schwarzenberg; both Ribbentrop and Göring were astounded by Hitler's decision.

page 82 Wolf Eberhard described the finger-and-thumb episode to me; after the entry into Prague in March 1939, Keitel actually reminded Eberhard of it.

page 83 In addition to published and unpublished British, French, German, Czech, Polish and American documents I drew extensively on interrogations of Ribbentrop, Andor Hencke (the Secretary of the Prague Legation), General von Wietersheim, General von Salmuth, Halder, General Kalmann Hardy (the Hungarian military attaché), Nicolaus von Horthy, Brauchitsch and Blaskowitz, and on the written testimonies of Below, Engel, Adam and Henlein's Berlin agent, Fritz Bürger, for the chapters that follow.

Besides the Weizsäcker, Jodl, and Eberhard diaries three more diaries are now of importance: that kept by Hitler's ADC Max Wünsche from Jun 16 to Nov 20, 1938 (NS.10/25) listing the Führer's appointments and decisions: the diary of Helmuth Groscurth, published as *Tagebücher eines Abwehroffiziers 1938–1940* (Stuttgart, 1970), and Goebbels's May 1938 diary.

page 85 For Keitel's instruction of Mar 28, 1938, see file PG/33274.

page 86 Likus reported, on Apr 26, Hitler's remarks to Sztójay (AA, serial 43, 28929).

page 87 Hitler's visit to Rome is described in many sources – notably in Julius Schaub's manuscripts, in Engel's notes, and in Wiedemann's San Francisco manuscript of Mar 28, 1939.

page 88 Hitler's remark aboard *Conte Cavour* was recalled to Ciano on Aug 13, 1939: it is clearer from the draft (Loesch film, F5, or T120/610) than from the final typescript that this was Hitler's, not Mussolini's remark.

page 89 Speer and Schaub both confirmed Hitler's gratitude to the Social Democrats for abolishing the monar-

chy; so do the typescript memoirs of Franz von Sonnleitner, which Reinhard Spitzy kindly made available to me; and see Dr. Werner Koeppen's note of Sep 18, 1941: Koeppen wrote 192 summaries of Hitler's mealtime conversation for Rosenberg's information; of these, Nos. 27–55 have survived (T84/387).

page 89 Jeschonnek's report is in naval staff file PG/33272.

page 90 Hitler's private remarks were in his Table Talk, Oct 21–22, 1941. See also the post-war interrogations of Albert Speer and – with due caution – his books, and the fine (but unpublished) dissertation by Dr. Armand Dehlinger on Nazi reconstruction plans for Munich and Nuremberg (IfZ, MS 8/1). Schmundt recorded Keitel's and his own secret conferences with Hitler several times between Apr and Oct 1938, and filed the notes with telegrams and directives on 'Green.' Schmundt's 'Green' file was microfilmed by NA at my request (their film T77/1810). A formal war diary was also begun shortly after by Helmuth Greiner for the OKW's National Defence branch (L.), as an entry in Eberhard's diary on Nov 22, 1938, on Keitel's daily conference records: 'Greiner: goes on leave, after completion of War Diary for period from May 21, 1938 to conclusion of Czech crisis: Valuable material compiled daily, largely from hand-written notes of Chief of OKW [Keitel]. Wehrmacht adjutant, Lieut.-Colonel Schmundt, suggests note to effect that further complementary documents are in his files.' (The 1938 Greiner war diary has not been seen since.)

page 91 In Reich justice ministry files is a note on the fate of the two Czech policemen (Koranda and Kriegl) who gunned down the two Sudeten German farmers. On Oct 20, 1940 the minister ruled that they had no case to answer; but Himmler nonetheless had them locked away (BA, R.22/4087).

page 92 Puttkamer cabled Raeder on May 24, 1938 about Hitler's prediction that Britain and France would now be the Reich's enemies: see naval files PG/36794, 33535 and 34162 for the telegram, together with the flurry of conferences that Hitler's prophecy instigated at naval staff level.

page 92 Hitler's order for the West Wall – popularly dubbed the Siegfried Line – is mentioned in Fritz Todt's diaries and papers (in family possession), in Adam's memoirs, and in records of the General Staff's fortifications branch (T78/300).

page 93 In view of their importance, I completely deciphered Beck's pencilled notes written during Hitler's speech on May 28, 1938 (N.28/3); my transcript is in the Irving Collection, IfZ. Wiedemann also described the speech in his 1939 and 1940 manuscripts (film DJ–19) and in various interrogations. In his diary Weizsäcker observed on May 31, 1938: 'On 28 May the Führer briefed his intimates in a three-hour speech to the effect that preparations for the later settlement of the Czech problem are to be forced ahead. He named..? [*sic*] as the date.'

page 93 Raeder's stipulation appears again in the naval staff's study of Oct 25, 1938 (PG/34181): 'The objective of land operations [in the west] must be to occupy the Channel coast as far as the western approaches (Brest etc.),' because to occupy this coastline would

be 'of overriding importance for the navy and Luftwaffe in the event of war with Britain/France.'

Raeder doubtless made this plain to Hitler on May 27, because in his secret speech next day Hitler confirmed (according to Beck's cryptic notes), 'Objective of a war in west (France and Britain) is enlarging our coastal baseline (Belgium, Holland). Danger of Belgian and Czech neutrality. Therefore eliminate Czechs.' Wolfgang Foerster's interpretation of these lines in *Ein General kämpft gegen den Krieg* (Munich, 1949) is wrong: he expands them to suggest that the enlarging of the baseline (Belgium and Holland) would be the objective of war with the western powers; in fact it was the *prerequisite*, as Beck's original note shows.

page 95 Wünsche's diary has lain unrecognised in Adjutantur des Führers files since 1945: now in BA file NS.10/125; and see NS.10/116. Fan-mail on the Schmeling fight: NS.10/13 and NS.10/88.

page 96 For Hitler's directive on pornographic interrogations, as quoted, see Lammers' file R.43 II/1536 and justice ministry file BA, R.22/1085. Such a rule would have spared President Bill Clinton much embarrassment in the 1998–9 Monica Lewinsky affair.

page 97 The quotation on Kempka is from his RuSHA dossier (BDC).

page 97 My account of Hitler's relations with women is based on Wiedemann's Feb 1939 manuscript; Schaub's papers; a manuscript by Henriette Hoffmann; and an interrogation summary of Dr. Karl Brandt titled 'Women around Hitler,' Aug 6, 1945. Specifically on Geli Raubal, I interviewed her brother Leo Raubal in Linz, and used too the interrogation of their mother, the later Frau Angela Hammitzsch (46M-13) and of the housekeeper Anni Winter (IfZ, ZS.494).

page 97 Emil Maurice discussed his role with Christa Schroeder, who was my source. Top Nazis gossiped freely about Hitler's triangular affair – see Goebbels's diary for Oct 19, 1928: 'Kaufmann . . . tells me crazy things about the Chief, his niece Geli, and Maurice . . . I understand everything, true and untrue.'

page 99 The Eva Braun diary, 6 Feb to 28 May 1935, is periodically 'rediscovered' – for example by Dr. Werner Maser in *Jasmin*. Its faking by Eva herself is testified to by one of her friends, Frau Marion Schönmann.

page 100 Speer's memorandum is in Party chancellery files (T580/871).

page 101 Todt's letter to Thorak is in Todt family papers.

page 103 A transcript of Hitler's secret speech is in BA file NS.26/51.

page 104 The quotation is from his secret speech to Nazi editors on 10 Nov 1938. See my note to page 47.

page 105 Adolf Hitler's 'Study on the problems of Our Works of Fortification' is dated Berchtesgaden July 1, 1938 (ND, 1801–PS). Warlimont stated under interrogation, 'It is one of the best examples of Hitler's military talent.' And General Kurt Zeitzler agreed in a 1961 lecture (N.63/96) that Hitler had enormous sympathy with the hardships of combat troops – it was Hitler who pointed to the need for fortified latrines in the West Wall. One sketch of a command post by Hitler will be found in BA file 75134/38.

page 106 Todt refers to his visit to the Berghof in a letter to Ministerialrat Schönleben on Aug 12, 1938 (Todt papers).

page 106 'Put the wind up them' – the quotation is from Eberhard's diary, Aug 15, 1938. Eszterházy's report to the Hungarian General Staff is in the Budapest national archives. See Professor Jörg Hoensch's standard work, *Der ungarische Revisionismus und die Zerschlagung der Tschechoslowakei* (Tübingen, 1967). Winston Churchill, who had seen Henlein in London on May 13, 1938, was clearly completely taken in by his reasonableness and apparent independence of Hitler's will. See Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, v, 939ff and Goebbels's diary.

page 106 For this visit, see Wiedemann's papers. Sir Alexander Cadogan, Chamberlain's adviser, wrote in his diary on July 18, 1938, 'He [Wiedemann] said he was Hitler's adjutant when H. was a "despatch bearer" during war, had to confess he never suspected his possibilities – thought him just a brave, reliable soldier.' As for Forster's meeting with Churchill, the Soviet government published Churchill's account of it as found in German files (*Dokumente und Materialien aus der Vorgeschichte des Zweiten Weltkrieges*, *1937 – 1938*, Bd.I [Moscow], 144).

page 107 Jodl's diary has the best account of Hitler's Berghof speech (of 10 Aug). Wietersheim, Keitel, Adam, and Halder rendered later descriptions, as did Salmuth in a manuscript dated Feb 2, 1946, in my possession, and General Bernhard, in a letter to Louis Lochner dated May 28, 1945 (HL, Lochner papers, box 2).

page 108 Eberhard glued a four-page note on Hitler's secret speech of Aug 15, into his diary. Some months later Liebmann also wrote an account (IfZ, ED.1).

page 111 Post-war publications by the exile Hungarians are coy about how far they agreed to aid the Nazis, but the contemporary records seem plain enough – especially the Hungarian notes on their talks with Hitler, Göring, Keitel, Beck, and Brauchitsch Aug 22–26, 1938, in which the Hungarian position was stated at one stage as: 'Hungary has every intention of squaring accounts with Czechoslovakia in her own interest, but cannot be precise as to a date' (T973/15/0326ff); see also the 1941 report by the German general attached to Hungarian forces (T78/458/5349). I used in addition Weizsäcker's private papers, interrogations of Hardy and Horthy, and interviews of Spitzy and Raeder's adjutant, Captain Herbert Friedrichs.

page 112 Hitler's conferences with the West Wall generals are recorded in General Staff files (T78/300/1364ff) and Adam's memoirs (IfZ, ED.109/2) as well as Jodl's diary.

page 115 The memorandum, dated Sep 1, 1938, is in Schwerin von Krosigk's files (T178/300/1302ff).

page 118 The complete file of FA 'brown pages,' Sep 14–26, 1938, reporting Beneš's telephone conversations with Masaryk and others, was handed by the Nazis to the British ambassador in Berlin on the twenty-sixth (PRO, FO.371/21742). In Prague and London the Czechs (Hodza and Masaryk) indignantly denied them at the time; but one of Masaryk's staff later

admitted to British author Laurence Thompson – who did not see the actual wiretaps – that the conversations had taken place (see *The Greatest Treason* [London], 121). Kittel and Spitzy confirm this, as does Emil Rasche (in report XE.4896, NA: RG.226).

page 119 Chamberlain's visit to the Berghof is reported in his own notes, in the diaries of Wünsche, Goebbels, and former ambassador Ulrich von Hassell, *Vom andern Deutschland* (Frankfurt, 1964), Sep 17, 1938, and in the British Cabinet minutes. On Sep 16, Weizsäcker wrote to his mother: 'For about an hour yesterday the Führer related to Ribbentrop and me how his talks went. Both from an objective and from a psychological point of view it was perhaps the most interesting thing I've heard for a long time.'

page 120 On the Sudeten Free Corps, see Dr. Martin Broszat's excellent study in *VfZ*, 1961, 30ff; and Köchling's own report dated Oct 11, 1938 (ND, EC–366–1).

page 123 Churchill's sneak visit to France raised hackles on both sides of the Channel. Sir Maurice Hankey wrote in his diary on Oct 2, 'Winston Churchill's sudden visit to France by aeroplane, accompanied by General [E. L.] Spears, and his visit only to the members of the French Government like Mandel, who is opposed to the policy of peace, was most improper – Bonnet, the French foreign minister, has complained about it, asking what we would say if our prominent French statesmen did the same.'

page 124 Hitler's codebreakers at Godesberg: referred to in USFET Intelligence summary on the Forschungsamt, Oct 4, 1945.

page 127 The events of Sep 28, 1938 are chronicled in Hassell's, Eberhard's, Jodl's and Weizsäcker's diaries and in the telegram of the American chargé d' affaires to the US State Department on Oct 21, 1938 (*The Foreign Relations of the United States* [hereafter *FRUS*] *1938*, I, 727ff). I also used Likus' report to Ribbentrop, 3 Oct (AA, serial 43, 28993). According to Wiedemann, under interrogation in 1945, Hitler admitted to Göring that the British fleet mobilisation was the reason for his change of heart: 'You see, Göring,' Hitler said a month later, 'at the last moment I thought the British fleet would shoot.'

page 128 The Luftwaffe lieutenant who acted as interpreter at Hitler's private meetings with the Italians that day, Sep 29, was Peter-Paul von Donat; see *Deutsches Adelsblatt*, Jun 15, 1971, for his account.

page 130 Commenting on the 'piece of paper' over lunch in Berlin on Oct 1, Hitler remarked, according to Goebbels's diary, that he did not expect Britain to honour it. Chamberlain was a real fox: 'He tackles each issue ice-cool,' he repeated, adding: 'We're really going to have to watch out for these British.' The document went into the AA archives with a Top State Secret classification. In a private letter on Sep 30, Fritz Todt wrote: 'The last few weeks have been tough going. But in four months we have poured the same amount of concrete along our frontier as the French managed in four years. This fact was not without its effect on the [Munich] conference.'

page 132 For a published work on Nazi subversion in Slovakia that winter, see

Jörg Hoensch, *Die Slowakei und Hitlers Ostpolitik* (Cologne–Graz, 1965). Notes on the Nazis' talks with Slovak leaders are on Loesch film F18 (T120/625). For the Czech documentation, see *Das Abkommen von München*, *Tschechoslowakische diplomatische Dokumente 1937–1939* (Prague, 1968).

page 133 A translation of one Göring diary, Oct 3, 1938–Aug 8, 1942, was published in the London *Daily Herald*, July 7–14, and the New York *Herald Tribune*, July 6–24, 1945.

page 134 For these FA wiretaps, see the FA's highly significant summary 'On British Policy from Munich to the Outbreak of War' (N.140098) in Woermann's AA file entitled 'Documents: Outbreak of War' (T120/723). It seems surprising that every historian who has written on that subject (including A.J.P. Taylor, Walther Hofer, Joachim Fest) overlooked this file. I published the entire document in translation in *Breach of Security* (London, 1968), with supporting materials, and in *Das Reich hört mit* (Kiel, 1995).

page 134 Thomas described Keitel's telephone call from Munich in several post-war interrogations, and in a speech to his Armaments Inspectors on Mar 29, 1940 (see the BA publication, *Geschichte der deutschen Wehr- und Rüstungswirtschaft 1918–1945*, Appendix III).

Mrs Jutta Thomas, my private secretary in London for over twenty years, who performed many feats including transcribing the Rommel shorthand diaries, mentioned only when she finally retired that the late General Thomas was her father-in-law.

page 136 Goebbels's scandalous behaviour is noted in the private diaries of Groscurth, Dec 30, 1938, and Hassell, Jan 22, 1939. Rudolf Likus minuted his chief, Ribbentrop, on Nov 3, 1938: 'There has been uproar at the Gloria Palace cinema from Friday to Sunday during showing of the film *Spieler*. Lida Baarova was jeered. As from Monday the film has been dropped.' (AA, serial 43, 29042). Hitler's desire for Magda Goebbels arose, as he admitted to Christa Schroeder, from her likeness to Geli Raubal. For the British embassy's views on her see PRO file FO.371/21671; and on the divorce scandal of Oct 1938, FO.371/21665 and /21791, and my biography *Goebbels. Mastermind of the Third Reich* (Focal Point, 1996), chapters 26–32.

page 137 The quotation is from Jodl's draft of Oct 19, 1938 (T77/775/0629).

page 138 For the Jewish problem in Czechoslovakia after Munich, see Heinrich Bodensieck's analysis in *VfZ*, 1961, 249ff. Helmut Heiber wrote a brilliant study of the unusual Grynszpan case in *VfZ*, 1957, 134ff. Here is not the place to explore the extraordinary manner in which the alleged assassin's adroit French lawyer obliged the Nazis to drop their plans (in 1942) to try the case: suffice to say that Grynszpan survived the war in a concentration camp and was last known living in Paris in the 1950s.

page 140 The action report is in BDC file 240/1. For the British embassy's reports on Kristallnacht, see PRO file FO.371/21637. Again, my *Goebbels. Mastermind of the Third Reich* provides in chapter 32 the first fully documented inside account.

page 141 The 'igniting' function of Goebbels's speech that evening is clear

from a Nuremberg interrogation of Ribbentrop on Sep 13, 1945, and of Julius Streicher (who had it at first hand from SA General Hanns-Günther von Obernitz); and from the report of the Party Court to Göring, Feb 13, 1939 (ND, 3063–PS). The telexes issued that night also tell their own story: at 11:55 P.M. an 'igniting' signal by the Gestapo, Berlin (374–PS); at 1:20 A.M. a further one by Heydrich from Munich (3052–PS); at 2:10 A.M. one by Eberstein (BDC file 240/I) to his subsidiary police commanders at Augsburg, Nuremberg, etc., expanding on 374–PS, no doubt before Eberstein's bawling out by Hitler; and then at 2:56 A.M. the 'extinguishing' telex was sent out as quoted (3063–PS), and repeated to all gauleiters (BDC file 240/I). At 3:45 A.M. the Berlin Gestapo came into line (copy in Groscurth's papers).

page 141 The fury of Hitler, Göring, Himmler and even Heydrich at Goebbels's arbitrary act is borne out in varying degree by numerous contemporary sources including – by implication – his private diary, first transcribed by me; Groscurth's and Hassell's diaries, Wiedemann's 1939 manuscript on the pogrom, the unpublished memoirs of the Luftwaffe's chief judge-advocate Christian von Hammerstein, Engel's notes, and Likus' report of Nov 30 (AA serial 43, 29067).

page 141 The principal witnesses of events in Hitler's apartment are Below and Schaub, the adjutants. I also used the IfZ testimonies of Karl Wolff, Max Jüttner, Wiedemann, Brückner and Engel, and Schallermeier (Wolff's aide: see IMT, xliii, 511ff.)

page 142 For Hitler's attitude on the Jewish problem at this time, see his talk with the South African minister Pirow on Nov 24, 1938 and especially with Colonel Josef Beck, the Polish foreign minister, on Jan 5, 1939. He said, 'If the western powers had summoned up a little more understanding for Germany's colonial demands I might have made available a territory in Africa as a solution for the Jewish problem, which could have been used to settle not only the German but also the Polish Jews. . .'

page 143 The speech of Nov 10: see my reference to page 47.

page 143 SS Brigadier Dr. Benno Martin, the Nuremberg police president, was present when Hitler made the remark at dinner on Nov 14. Weizsäcker refers to Hitler's 'revenge' remark several times in his diaries – in Feb, on Mar 16, 1939, on Jan 28, 1940 and in his Oct 1939 survey of events leading to the war.

page 143 Hitler's thoughts in November are set out by Keitel in a brief dated Nov 26, sent by him to the services on Dec 1, 1938 (PG/33316 and Loesch film F19, or T120/624).

page 144 One record of the Reich Defence Council session of Nov 18 is in naval files, PG/33272: a better one is Woermann's note, on Loesch film F19 (T120/ 624). Shorthand reports of this and other sessions of the council are also in BA file Wi/IF.5.560 (NA film T77/ 131).

page 146 As Krosigk emphasises (IfZ, ZS.A/20), Schacht was dismissed – he did not resign. For chancellery records leading up to Schacht's dismissal, see the Allied compilation DE.482/DIS.202 of Oct 26, 1945 (in HL) and 3520–PS.

page 147 Hitler's three secret

speeches – of Jan 18 and 25, and Feb 10, 1939 – will be found with the transcript of his speeches of Nov 10, 1938 and Mar 11, 1939 (page 159) in BA file NS.11/28. For different transcripts of two of them see IfZ files F 19/10 and ED-57, together with the diaries of Groscurth, Hassell, Milch and Eberhard, and Likus' report of Feb 2, 1939.

page 154 On Hitler's changing posture towards the USSR: interrogations of Gustav Hilger, and his memoirs *Wir und der Kreml* (Frankfurt, 1955); of General Ernst Köstring, the former military attaché there; of Friedrich Gaus, Ribbentrop's legal expert; and E. M. Robertson's early but authoritative Cabinet Office monograph, 'Barbarossa, the Origins and Development of Hitler's Plan to Attack Russia' (Mar 1952).

page 157 An illuminating narrative on the 'burrowing' by Hitler's agents into Slovakia is CSDIC (UK) report SIR.830, of Aug 28, 1944, on the interrogation of a Viennese SD officer, Neugebauer; this reveals the roles of Ribbentrop, Göring, and the SD, and their secret contacts with Durcansky, Tiso, Tuka, Karmasin, and others (NA, RG.332, Mis-Y, box 4.)

page 158 I found Hewel's note on the events on Mar 10, 1939 among his family papers. Louis Lochner also described a dinner that night with the 'terribly preoccupied' Ribbentrop, Heydrich and other Nazis, in a letter to his children a few days later (Lochner Papers, Wisconsin, box 47).

page 160 Elisabeth Wagner, the general's widow, lent to me about 2,000 pages of his letters – only the more innocuous parts of which she published in her book *Der Generalquartiermeister*.

page 160 For my account of Hitler's controversial all-night session with Hácha, I relied – apart from Hewel's protocol – on the testimony of Keitel, Warlimont, interpreter Paul Schmidt, Keppler, Göring, Werner Kiewitz, and Schaub.

page 161 Himmler's consternation: witnessed by Keitel and Schweppenburg, who later commented that Hitler had evident personal courage: 'On the afternoon of Mar 16, 1939, Prague was anything but a safe place for the German head of state to be.' In a private letter Eduard Wagner – one of the 1944 plotters! – also expressed his 'uneasiness over the Führer's personal safety' that day; and see Rommel's private letter of that day (T84/R275/0015).

page 163 Hácha's daughter wrote thanking Hitler for his courtesy: see the Adjutantur file NS.10/18. Propaganda directives to editors are in BA file ZSg 101.

page 164 Colonel Curt Siewert's note on Hitler's discussion with Brauchitsch, Mar 25, 1939, is ND, R–100. Referring to Stalin's speech of Mar 10, Molotov was to remark on Aug 31, 1939: 'It is now evident that in Germany they understood these statements of comrade Stalin correctly on the whole and drew practical conclusions from them [*Laughter*].' Friedrich Gaus also testified in a Nuremberg affidavit that when Ribbentrop related to Stalin on Aug 23 how the Führer had interpreted the Mar 1939 speech as a Soviet overture, Stalin replied: 'That was the intention' (Jackson papers).

page 165 Hitler ordered one newsreel

run twice; sitting next to him, Leni Riefenstahl heard him murmur, 'He [Stalin] looks like the kind of person one could deal with' (interview, July 1989).

page 165 The evidence that it was on Mar 31 – *i.e.*, after the British guarantee was announced – that Hitler asked for an OKW directive on 'White,' is to be found in the diaries of Eberhard, Bormann and Major Wilhelm Deyhle, Jodl's adjutant (ND, 1796–PS), and an interrogation of Warlimont. On Mar 30, Colonel Wagner wrote, 'Tomorrow the C.-in-C. [Brauchitsch] and the Führer get back and all our briefing notes must be ready by then'; and on Apr 1, Wagner used the phrase, '. . . yesterday, when the Führer took the decision' (*gestern bei der Führerentscheidung*).

page 180 The extraordinary Albrecht affair occurred in June 1939, not July as the Engel 'diary' suggests; see Albrecht's BDC file. By July 8, Below was already performing some of his duties (see *e.g.*, Weizsäcker's files, serial 97, 108413). I also drew on statements of Puttkamer, Admiral Gerhard Wagner, Karl Brandt, Vormann, and Raeder's two adjutants, Friedrichs and Kurt Freiwald, and on the Groscurth diary. Christa Schroeder recalls telling Hitler of public criticism of the way the older Party figures were loosely divorcing their wives in favour of younger women. Hitler replied, 'The hardest fighters deserve only the finest women!' This enabled her to reply: 'Oh, mein Führer, then what a beauty *you* ought to have!'

page 181 Hitler's attitude to the Church establishment and to religious doctrines is well illustrated in the Table Talk notes written by Heim and Bormann, and by Rosenberg's liaison officer Koeppen in 1941 (T84/387), and the Hewel diary entries that I quote. An official circular of Dec 10, 1935 formulated, 'The Reich Chancellor [Hitler] was born a Catholic; he still adheres to the Catholic religion, but makes no use of its amenities, *e.g.*, regular churchgoing or religious services' (BA file R43 II/961). According to his doctor, Hasselbach, Hitler paid Church Tax dues to the very end (quoted in *Frankenpost*, Mar 12, 1947).

page 185 Niemöller aroused strong passions even in 1945. The material on him includes vivid OCMH interrogations of Meissner, Krosigk, and Lammers; Engel's notes; Likus' reports to Ribbentrop; Hans Buchheim's study on the Niemöller trial in *VfZ*, 1956, 307ff; Krosigk's papers in the IfZ (ZS.A/20), and Dr. Goebbels's 1938 diary.

page 186 For Hitler's confrontation with Niemöller on Jan 25, 1934, I used the Göring interrogation of Jul 20, 1945, a hand-written account by Lammers and versions rendered by Krosigk and Dönitz in July 1945 (OCMH), and the *Table Talk* of Apr 7, 1942. See too Rosenberg's diary, Jan 19, 1940 (Hitler said he had 'mimicked Niemöller's sanctimonious phraseology and then ordered the man's earlier phone conversation – which was conducted in the crudest matelot's jargon – to be read out loud to them. Result: embarrassed collapse of stout brethren!') The actual FA intercept is in BA file R.43 II/163.

page 186 Many moderates considered Niemöller's incarceration well deserved, among them Dönitz – the pastor's former crewmate at naval academy – Lammers and Krosigk (OCMH).

Niemöller was after all preaching open sedition from his pulpit. The Allied interrogators also minuted that Niemöller's personality was 'a matter of concern to AMG [Allied Military Government] officers.' As late as Jul 28, 1943, Field Marshal Wolfram von Richthofen recorded in his diary Göring's reflection that 'the Führer tried just about everything to establish one Reich Church along Lutheran lines; but the obstinacy of the Church leaders thwarted every attempt.'

page 187 The surreptitious preparations in Danzig are referred to in the war diaries of the Military Commander of Danzig (BA, RH.53–20/V.25) and the divisional surgeon of Eberhardt's *Kampfgruppe* (BA, P.1355). See also the diary kept by Field Marshal Fedor von Bock (N.22/1), and his formal operational proposal submitted on May 27, 1939 to Brauchitsch (BA, II–H.82 I). Himmler also outlined the role of the SS *Heimwehr* in Danzig in his speech of Aug 3, 1944 in *VfZ*, 1953, 357ff. See too *Danziger Vorposten* (the local Nazi newspaper).

page 188 The Rechlin display is extensively covered by the Milch documents: see especially MD.51/5667ff, MD.62/5293 and /5470, MD.65/7326 and /7347 and MD.56/2678.

page 189 August Kubizek related the 1906 episode in his book, *Adolf Hitler mein Jugendfreund* (Göttingen, 1953); it was confirmed by his widow Paula in Eferding (Austria) and by Winifred Wagner, in interviews with us.

page 190 Wohlthat's report of Jul 24, 1939 is on NA special film ML/123; see also Dirksen's report of Jul 21. The secret talks were leaked by *The Daily Telegraph* and *News Chronicle* on Jul 22 and 23. German press circulars show attempts to play them down: HL, Fritzsche papers, box 4. The best study so far is by Helmut Metzmacher in *VfZ*, 1966, 370ff; since then the British file on the Wohlthat mission has been released to the PRO, FO.371/22990.

page 192 I rely on Lossberg's unpublished manuscript, rather than his later book *Im Wehrmachtführungsstab* (Hamburg, 1949).

page 193 Hitler afterwards bragged of the agent he had placed at Croydon: see Captain Wolf Junge's unpublished manuscript (Irving Collection, IfZ).

page 193 This fragment of the Lahousen diary is ND, 3047–PS.

page 193 Heydrich first put the scheme to manufacture 'border incidents' to SS Colonel Trummler, SS Brigadier Otto Rasch and SS General Heinrich Müller – of the Gestapo – in a Berlin conference on Aug 8, 1939. The later police general Otto Hellwig was present and wrote a manuscript which is in my possession. The famous Gleiwitz operation was first adumbrated at the second conference, on or about Aug 11. See also the Hassell diary, Aug 15, and Dr. Jürgen Runzheimer's study in *VfZ*, 1962, 408ff (he also supplied me with further unpublished material).

page 195 The interpreter Eugen Dollmann described the scene as Hewel hurried in, in a (monitored) conversation of Jun 4, 1945 (CSDIC report CMF/X.173).

page 195 Hitler's Berghof conference of Aug 14, 1939 is referred to in the diaries of Halder, Bormann and Milch. For the pages that follow I also drew heavily on naval staff files PG/33984, PG/33979, PG/32201 and the AA files

on Poland, Danzig and the outbreak of the war.

page 196 For the deception methods, see the papers on *Die Meistersinger* (BA, Schumacher Sammlung, 368) and on the Tannenberg ceremony (MD.65/7323). The US envoy was completely hoodwinked, cabling Washington on Aug 8 that it was 'unlikely that any action requiring extensive use of railroad and other transportation will be launched by Germany from the latter part of Aug to middle of Sep' (NA, 740.00/2026); and see Meissner's letter to Brückner, Aug 15 (NS.10/12), and the Party's circular, Aug 8, 1939, detailing the uniform to be worn to the Party Rally in September (HL, Goebbels Papers, box 2.)

page 196 The Jablunka tunnel and Dirschau bridge operations are well narrated in the official German monograph by Herbert Schindler, *Mosty und Dirschau 1939* (Freiburg, 1971). I also used Lahousen's diary Aug 17 *et seq.*, and his post-war testimony, Canaris's note on a talk with Keitel on Aug 17 (ND, 795–PS), Halder's diary of that date and – with caution – Groscurth's second-hand version in his diary of Aug 24; and the War Diary of the Eighth Army, Aug 31, 1939, together with an Abwehr file in the BA, OKW 74.

page 199 The OKW invitation dated Aug 19 is in naval file PG/33984. Five versions were written of Hitler's speech on Aug 22: by Halder, Albrecht, Boehm (ND, Raeder–27), Bock and Canaris (ND, 789–PS and 1014–PS); see also Groscurth's diary, Aug 24, 1939. The speech is briefly mentioned in the diaries of Milch, Leeb and Felber (the Eighth Army's chief of staff, N.67/2). Other versions exist, but they are of only secondary value; the lurid script played into the enemy's hands by the Canaris/Oster circle (ND,003–L) is quite worthless. See Winfried Baumgart's scholarly investigation in *VfZ*, 1968, 120ff.

page 200 Hitler did not deny that the western powers might declare war (but he believed that they would not actually fight). Bock later quoted him as having said: 'I don't know whether the British will join in against us or not.' Vormann was briefed by Keitel on Aug 24 that Hitler still hoped to face Poland alone; but the Führer realised that Britain and France would be hostile and might even break off diplomatic relations and start economic warfare against the Reich.

page 200 The reference to crushing 'the living daylights' – *die lebendigen Kräfte* – out of Poland was misinterpreted by the Allied prosecutors at Nuremberg. In fact Hitler was just stating the basic military fact that the strategic objective was to destroy the enemy, not attain some line on a map. The professional soldiers present understood this perfectly (see, *e.g.*, Bock's diary). Note that Hitler used precisely the same turn of phrase in his harangue to the generals before the Battle of the Ardennes, on Dec 12, 1944 (Heiber, *op. cit.*, 721).

page 201 There are two original albums of photographs of Ribbentrop's Moscow trip in HL, William R. Philp papers.

page 202 The next day, Aug 23, 1939, Göring called an important conference with the leading Reich ministers, about which Dr. Herbert Backe – state-secretary in the food ministry – wrote pri-

vately on the thirty-first: 'I came to Berlin on Sunday [20 Aug]. On . . . [23 Aug?] we were asked round to Carinhall. Göring, Funk, Darré, Körner, Landfried, myself, Behrens, Neumann, and Posse. Göring disclosed in strictest confidence to us that it has been decided to attack Poland. He asked each of us about our own war preparations. Ration cards. We have managed to keep bread and potatoes ration-free for the first four weeks because of the good supply position. Fortunately, Göring reluctantly agreed. To safeguard the element of surprise, Göring has insisted on the strictest security. Everybody's mood was very optimistic. The attack has been set down for Friday the twenty-fifth. . . After Carinhall, it was obvious to me that we would only be up against Poland – *i.e.*, there would not be a world war – and that this risk could be accepted.'

page 204 For the text of Mussolini's first letter to Hitler on Aug 25 (later cancelled), see Ciano's letter to the King in Mussolini's personal papers (T586/405/0237).

page 205 The time – 3:02 P.M. – is recorded in the private diaries of four people present: Vormann, Weizsäcker, Halder, and Wagner. See also the war diary of Führer's HQ (T77/858/4392ff) and Rommel's excited letters to his wife (T84/R273a), and the naval staff war diary, 3:30 P.M.

page 205 Hitler's special train is described at length in CSDIC (UK) report SIR.970, dated Sep 25, 1944.

page 206 Many observers thought that after this fiasco of Aug 25, 1939, Hitler would be forced to call off 'White' altogether. Eduard Wagner, representative of feelings in the General Staff, wrote to his wife next day: 'Couldn't write last night as evening very hectic. You can calm down – as far as I can see nothing's going to happen!' Vormann's letter of Aug 26 also gives a vivid picture of the previous day's events (transcripts in Irving Collection, IfZ).

page 206 Lieutenant Herzner's handwritten account of the desperate Jablunka operation is in Günter Peis's possession in Munich, as is Hellwig's narrative of the last-minute cancellation of fake 'Polish' incidents in Upper Silesia.

page 207 The FA 'brown pages' on Ciano's phone call to Attolico, numbers N.125,894 and N.125,810, are to be found in an OKW file (T77/545). See also Mackensen's papers, AA serial 100. On Italy's posture, Göring was surprisingly sympathetic. Backe's letter of Aug 31 continues '. . . G[öring] disclosed to us in strict confidence that Italy's not going to join in. This is why the attack was cancelled. . . Now we've got to see how we can get out of the mess. He says that besides the Russian pact we also signed a secret deal (he told us that already once at Carinhall: it evidently partitions Poland, with Warsaw allocated to us). Göring spoke up stoutly for Mussolini and his predicament, but added that if he was a real man he would have overthrown the monarchy. A tight spot for us. War unthinkable. If we get Danzig out of it, we'll be happy enough. Perhaps a slice of the Corridor too. Conference (Funk) concluded that new situation has a silver lining for us too, as now we won't have any bones to pick with France, while Italy has; so if we drop Italy we have a good chance of keeping France out. . . . We must avoid

war and try to save face.'

page 208 At midnight – 26/27 Aug – Goebbels sent for Backe, ostensibly to rebuke him for the low fruit and tea rations proposed. Backe wrote, 'Goebbels heaps exceptionally bitter criticism on the foreign ministry for over-secretiveness. Everybody knows Henderson and Coulondre have been to see the Führer, only the German radio isn't reporting it. The upshot is that the German public is forced to listen to foreign radios. I informed him of our grim food situation. . . Goebbels made a brilliant impression: objective, serious, determined. He has asked [his state secretary] Gutterer to brief the Führer on the difficulties with the foreign ministry, which rather leaves the impression that he himself is being given the cold shoulder.'

page 208 'Voices against War': Keitel's economics expert Georg Thomas referred, in a speech on Mar 29, 1940, to two unfavourable reports he had submitted: one warned of fuel and ammunition shortages, and called for economic mobilisation in view of the possibility of war with the western powers (possibly the document dated Aug 9, 1939 on film T77/312/4349); Hitler however responded there would be 'no war in the west, just war with Poland.' On Aug 26, 1939, Thomas submitted to Keitel a second report, which Keitel reluctantly forwarded to Hitler. Hitler rebuked him, 'Won't you ever stop pestering me about your "war in the west"!'

page 208 The key British files on Dahlerus are FO.371/22974, /22982, /22990, /34482, /39178; PREM.1/331a; and FO.800/316: the corresponding German secret records are on NA film ML/123.

page 209 As before, the FA wiretaps were all printed in my 1968 book *Breach of Security*. For another FA wiretap, see Halder's diary, Aug 28: 'Enemy knows old date (26th) and postponement. Britain and France feel unable to give way so long as our troops on frontier. Henderson working to gain time. Chamberlain shocked at personal insults.' Among other wiretaps shown to Hitler was one resulting on the Crown Prince's telephone at the Cecilienhof Chateau outside Potsdam. General Joachim von Stülpnagel, freshly appointed commander of the 740,000-strong reserve army, telephoned to announce his new appointment and to promise an early visit 'to ascertain your Majesty's orders'! Hitler sacked him that same day and replaced him with General Fritz Fromm.

page 209 No transcript of his speech to the Reichstag deputies has been found, but it is outlined adequately in the diaries of Halder, Groscurth, Hassell and Weizsäcker and mentioned in Backe's letter of Aug 31. See also Rudolf Likus' report of Aug 27 (AA serial 43, 29617). As for Hitler's private intentions towards the USSR, the Gestapo official Dr. Werner Best recalled later, 'After the Moscow pact was signed on Aug 23, word was passed round "internally" that we were not to be deceived by it – in two years at most the war against Russia would begin' (IfZ, ZS.207). Hassell, too, commented on Oct 11, 1939, 'It's highly possible – indeed quite probable since Hitler's speech to the Reichstag deputies – that deep down he's saving himself up for an attack on the Soviet Union.'

page 210 The date of the sixteen-point proposals is not clear. The copy in Ribbentrop's office file is marked Aug 28, 1939. Other sources suggest it originated next day.

page 212 I publish this FA intercept in *Breach of Security*. Shorn of its FA security heading, the transcript is also in Ribbentrop's office file (serial 43, 29636).

page 214 The war of the 'illegals' is highlighted in the war diaries of the Military Commander of Danzig, and of Frontier Defence Command (Sector 3), in BA file E.271/1. For the role of the SA Brownshirts, see Viktor Lutze's letter to Brauchitsch, Oct 13, 1939 (RH.I/v.58) and the Oct 6, 1943 speech of his successor Wilhelm Schepmann (T175/119/5023ff).

page 218 Goebbels's memorandum is in BA file NS.10/37

page 223 Colonel Eduard Wagner echoed Vormann's awe in a letter of Sep 4. 'Even so not a shot has been fired in the west yet, a funny war so far.' Apart from reference to the published sources, I based my account of the Polish campaign on the diaries of Jodl, Bock, Halder, Helmuth Groscurth, Milch, Vormann, the naval staff, Wagner, Lahousen. Rosenberg, and the commandant of Hitlers HQ; and on interrogations of Hans von Greiffenberg, Blaskowitz, Göring, Dönitz, Scheidt, Warlimont and Keitel. On Wilhelm Scheidt (deputy chief historian to the OKW) see Seventh Army interrogation in NA, RG.407, box 1954-I.

pages 225–226 Professor Martin Broszat's *Nationalsozialistische Polenpolitik 1939–1945* (Stuttgart, 1961). On the Bromberg massacre see the war diary of Rear Army Command 580 (General Braemer) in BA files (P.824), and of the Military Commander of West Prussia (RH53–20/v. 16). Kreisleiter Werner Kampe, appointed lord mayor of Bromberg with the job of 'extracting compensation for ethnic Germans who suffered Polish atrocities,' swindled the victims out of millions of marks to benefit befriended Party and civic officials (BA file R22/4087). About seven thousand Germans were massacred by the Poles in Bromberg.

page 227 Three copies of Canaris's memorandum of Sep 12, 1939, exist: one in the 'Canaris–Lahousen fragments' – a hitherto neglected file of key documents and extracts from the Canaris diary (AL/1933); one in Groscurth's papers (N.104/3); and an abbreviated copy in Lahousen's IMT file (3047–PS); *cf.* Lahousen's pre-trial interrogation of Sep 19, 1945, and Vormann's diary, Sep 12, 1939: 'Göring and Brauchitsch here at Ilnau. Canaris on account of Polish population.'

page 229 Heydrich's RSHA (Reich Main Security Office) conferences (on NA film T175/239); Heydrich's related memorandum of May 1941 in *VfZ*, 1963, page 197; and Heydrich's frank memorandum of Jul 1940, in Kurt Daluege's papers (BA, R.19), on the role of his task forces.

page 230 The purge in Poland: I used W. Huppenkothen's 1945 essays, in BDC files; a CSDIC interrogation of Udo von Woyrsch; Dr. Rudolf Lehmann's testimony; Halder's diary; Heydrich's conferences; and Klaus-Jürgen Müller's *Das Heer und Hitler* (Stuttgart, 1969). The three colonels were Groscurth, Vormann and Wagner respec-

tively – the latter after a discussion with Brauchitsch. The flavour of the General Staff's joint planning with Heydrich on Poland also emerges from Colonel Wagner's private letter of Sep 18, 1939: 'Problems of extreme political impact which have got to be discussed secretly with the C.-in-C. and Halder: this calls for no mean callousness, which I appear to possess.' And see General Heitz's note on the instructions Hitler issued to him on Sep 20 at Danzig: (1) Don't shed unnecessary blood to capture Hela; don't make martyrs. Hela must fall sooner or later. (2) Inflexible harshness in pacifying the country. (3) Further confidential instructions.' What can have been too confidential to commit to the War Diary?

page 232 I portray the capitulation of the Warsaw garrison from the war diaries of Eighth Army and Army Group North.

page 234 I reconstructed the history of Hitler's euthanasia order from the interrogations of doctors Brandt, Conti, and Lammers, and the Nuremberg testimony of Viktor Brack, a section head (*Amtsleiter*) of the Führer's chancellery in Berlin; see too the report by a nephew of Pastor von Bodelschwingh in PRO file WO.208/4174. The two studies by Hans Buchheim and Klaus Dörner in *VfZ*, 1967, page 121, and by Lothar Gruchmann, *VfZ*, 1972, page 235 *et seq*. are of unsound chronology. There are several justice ministry files on euthanasia in the BA, *e.g.*, R.22/993, /4209 and /5021. In the latter is a protest from Bishop Wurm on Sep 5, 1940: 'Does the Führer know what's going on? Has he given his approval?' In a memo of Nov 1, 1940 even Heydrich was said to dissociate himself: 'My security police have nothing to do with the operation that has meantime been started, it's Reichsleiter Bouhler.'

page 241 Apart from the Rosenberg and Groscurth diaries, for the curious mission of W.R. Davis see Wohlthat's record of the discussion between Davis and Göring on Oct 1 on NA film ML/123 (CO file AL/1506), together with the unpublished reports of the Dahlerus missions; Davis's letters to Roosevelt, Oct 11 and 12, Adolph R. Berle's diary (Oct 5, 6, and 7) and Roosevelt's diary, confirming that he met with Davis on Sep 15, are in FDRL. For John L. Lewis, see NA, RG.319, box 131: X.8516601.

page 241 The Polish documents were published by Ribbentrop's ministry as a White Book in April 1940; he had shown some to Mussolini in Mar. He and Göring mentioned them under interrogation in 1945. Adam Potocki, Polish ambassador in Washington, dismissed them as forgeries, but the carbon copies of the *originals*, in his papers in HL, prove them genuine.

page 243 Rommel wrote on Oct 8: 'It's very pleasing that Paris and London are already openly discussing Hitler's speech. The neutral voices are without exception in favour. I was at his conference for an hour and a half yesterday. The Führer is in best of moods, and confident.' For Dahlerus's reports, see PRO files FO.800/317, FO.371/23011, /23097, /23098, /23099. Hitler's attitude is reflected by a letter written by Hewel on Oct 14 to an English acquaintance: 'How often have I heard the Führer say, "Can Britain really be living so remote from the realities of European life as not to see the prob-

lems as they are?" I myself attended the conversations between the Führer and Henderson, in which this sick old man spoke such rubbish that the Führer finally came to the conclusion that Britain has no other ambition than the destruction of Germany.' Hewel continued: 'Every day the Führer and I read the British newspapers together, and we . . . just can't credit that there can be so many lies and falsehoods.'

page 246 Keitel's notes on Oct 17, 1939 are preserved (864–PS); further versions are in Groscurth's files (N.104/3) and diary, Oct 18; Hassell's diary, Dec 30, and Halder's diary, and a private letter of Wagner, Oct 18. Under interrogation Halder identified Canaris as his source (IMT interrogation, Feb 27, 1946; *cf.* GRGG.3326C, Aug 7, 1945).

page 247 Martin Bormann noted Hitler's speech in his diary, Oct 21: 'Reichsleiters and gauleiters to supper with Führer. After the meal the Führer gives them a picture of the situation, speaks for two and a half hours.' See too Groscurth's dubious version (N.104/3 and ML/123); in August 1940 Admiral Canaris remarked that 'already in a 1938 [*sic*] speech to the gauleiters in Berlin' Hitler had spoken of a campaign against Russia (hand-written testimony of Lieut. Gen. Franz von Bentivegni, Canaris's section chief, Sep 28, 1945).

page 250 Hitler was the original author of the strategy finally used in France. Professor H. A. Jacobsen, in *Wehrwissenschaftlicher Rundschau*, 1955, pages 433 *et seq.*, concludes that Manstein's staff work assured the subsequent triumph of Hitler's plan.

page 253 The earlier assassination attempts are touched on in Hitler's Table Talk on Sep 6, 1941 (Koeppen's note) and May 3, 1942 (Heim's note); Bavaud was beheaded in May 1942.

page 254 Dr. Anton Hoch, in *VfZ*, 1969, pages 383 *et seq.*, demolished the post-war legends by drawing upon the Gestapo interrogation of Georg Elser, the lone assassin (now in BA file R22/3100). I also used the diaries of Bormann and Groscurth, the day's detailed programme (NS.10/126), and testimonies of Below, Grolmann, Schaub, and Baron Karl von Eberstein. The Gestapo finally listed eight dead and sixty-three injured (T175/473/4876). The trials of Elser and his former employer, whose negligence had enabled him to steal the quarry explosives, were adjourned *sine die* (file R22/4087), and Elser was executed in April 1945.

page 255 Jodl's diary and post-war testimony, coupled with his adjutant Wilhelm Deyhle's notes (1786–PS), show that until Nov 13 Hitler was convinced he could amicably come to terms with Holland. An entry in the diary of Halder's Intelligence chief, General Kurt von Tippelskirch (BA file II H36/1), on Nov 12 proves that it was Hitler who ordered the kidnapping of the two British agents; he decorated the SS officers at a chancellery ceremony two days later (BDC file on SS Major Helmuth Knochen). British MI6 agent S. Payne Best's papers are in HL.

page 256 Admiral von Puttkamer told me of the Ardennes relief map; it was also seen by Lahousen in the chancellery on Nov 20, 1939, as he testified under interrogation six years later. Hitler himself referred to the relief map 'we used at that time in Berlin' in a war

conference on Sep 17, 1944 (Heiber, page 660).

page 257 The two Abwehr officers were Captain Fleck and Lieutenant Hokke, according to the diaries of Groscurth, Lahousen, Jodl and Halder. Lahousen noted: 'The Führer has asked for every demolition charge's ignition-hole [*Zündloch*] to be described to him.' A record of the conference of Nov 20, 1939, is in AL/1933.

page 258 The best records of Hitler's harangue of Nov 23, 1939 are in Leeb's diary and ND, 789–PS, which agrees well with a text in Groscurth's files (N.104/3). I also found summaries in the diaries of Colonel Hoffmann von Waldau, Bock, and Halder. General Hoth used it as the basis for a speech to the Fifteenth Army Corps' generals (BA file W.2005/2), and Admiral Raeder likewise for his section heads (PG/31762a).

page 264 I have been unable to resolve the conflict of evidence on Quisling's two meetings with Hitler in December 1939. Jodl's diary dates one the 13th; Raeder's note on Rosenberg's memo dates it the 14th; Rosenberg's diary dates it the 15th; the otherwise very informative survey drawn up by his *Aussenpolitisches Amt* (NS.43/25) states with equal confidence 'Quisling was received for a personal audience by the Führer on the 16th and again on the 18th.'

page 265 Raeder's adjutant (Freiwald) recalls that as they left the chancellery he hinted they might at least add to the signal, 'I wish you a safe further *voyage*.' Raeder refused however.

page 267 Professor Broszat covered some of the ground on Hitler's Polish policies (see my note to pages 225–226). I also used the Groscurth, Halder, and Milch diaries; Frank's verbatim remarks at a police conference on May 30, 1940 (2233–PS); an SS investigation of Soldau (NO–1073); testimony of General von Gienanth – Blaskowitz's successor – and Karl Wolff; and documents in chancellery files BA, R.43 II/1332 and /1411a. Himmler's notes are on NA microfilm T175/94.

page 268 For the case of the magistrate – Otto Christian von Hirschfeld – see the Reich justice ministry file BA, R 22/4087 and Lammers' memo in file R.43 II/1411a.

page 271 The 922-page ledger kept by Walther Hewel of the diplomatic papers submitted to Hitler from Jan 1940 to Aug 1942 is in AA files; it lists many of the Forschungsamt's intercepts, including for example a decoded Belgian telegram of Feb 11, 1940, reporting Ciano's comments to the Belgian envoy in Rome. For evidence that Ciano betrayed 'Yellow' to the Belgians see Groscurth's diary of Jan 2, and Halder's diary. On the seventh General Halder noted: 'Other side knows date'; and next day Major Hasso von Etzdorf told him of a 'telegram (Kerchove).' The latter was Belgian envoy in Rome. On Jan 18, Weizsäcker wrote to Mackensen in Rome: 'I believe Herr von Ribbentrop has briefed you about certain goings-on between Rome and Brussels.' (AA, serial 100, pages 64885 *et seq.*). On Jan 22, Halder's Intelligence chief wrote in his diary: 'It[alian] betrayal to Belg[ians] of German intentions and preparations.'

page 271 The report by Halder's Intelligence chief (Tippelskirch) on Belgium is in the files of Foreign Armies West

(AL/1329).

page 272 My account of the affair is based on Jacobsen's study in *WR*, 1954, pages 497 *et seq.*, Jean Vanwelkenhuyzen, *ibid.*, 1955, pages 66 *et seq.*, and the diaries of Jodl, Halder, Groscurth, Milch, Hassell, and Deyhle; on the Weizsäcker file on Belgium; and on interrogations of Göring and Below. About a dozen damning fragments did survive the flames; the general geography of 'Yellow' could be deduced from them. 'On Day 1 of the attack' the Eighth Air Corps' job would be to destroy the Belgian army west of the Meuse 'in close co-operation with the Sixth Army Schwerpunkt at and west of Maastricht.' The 7th Air Division (paratroops) had targets at Namur and Dinant. Another fragment stated: 'Additionally it is intended to occupy Holland. . .'

page 273 A postcard written by the Luftwaffe adjutant on May 14, 1940, confirms that Hitler struck on the victorious strategy in *1939*: 'I hinted at it to you at Christmas,' Colonel von Below reminded his uncle. The date of Schmundt's visit to Manstein is fixed by the diary of Frau Schmundt. Hitler instructed Schmundt to send secretly for Manstein, without informing either Brauchitsch or Halder. After meeting Hitler, Manstein marvelled in his own diary: 'What an extraordinary conformity with my own views!' According to Warlimont (MS P–215) Hitler saw the general off with the words: 'Manstein is the only person to see what I'm getting at.'

page 274 Several accounts exist of Hitler's dinner on Feb 17, 1940 – Manstein's, Rommel's private letter (T84/R273a/0866), and General Geyr von Schweppenburg's (IfZ, ZS.680).

page 275 On the *Altmark* affair I relied on the naval staff's war diary and its case file (PG/33730) – with its full-length report by the captain – the Jodl diary, and Weizsäcker's and Ernst Woermann's AA files. On the legal aspects, see Heinz Knackstedt, in *WR*, 1959, pages 391 and 466 *et seq.*, and the study by the US Naval War College in *International Law Situation and Documents*, 1956, pages 3 *et seq.*

page 276 I based my account of the developing plan to invade Norway on the diaries of Milch, Jodl, Halder, Tippelskirch, and the naval staff. Raeder's powerful support is clear in the latter diary entry on Mar 2, 1940, for example. I also employed the war diary of the army's XXI *Gruppe* (BA file E, 180/5), and Raeder's post-war manuscripts, 'My Relations with Adolf Hitler' and 'The Occupation of Norway on Apr 9, 1940' (ND, 1546–PS).

page 277 For the Allies' attempts to prolong the Russo-Finnish war, see the naval staff war diary, Mar 8–14, 1940. Weizsäcker hinted at the FA's coup in his diary of Mar 13, noting that the western powers had offered empty promises to Finland: 'We have hard evidence of this.' After Ribbentrop disclosed the Finnish envoy's message, in his White Book published on Apr 27, Dr. Pakaslahti, chief of the Finnish's FO's political department, cabled the envoy in Paris – Harri Holma – on May 14, identifying the telephone call intercepted as that at 3:30 P.M. on Mar 12 (Finnish FO archives, 109/C2e, Tel. R. 145). The call is mentioned in the diary of Finnish Foreign Minister Väinö Tan-

ner (see his memoirs, *Olin ulkoministerinä talvisodan aikana*, Helsinki, 1950, page 387). Ulrich Kittel – one of the Forschungsamt's section heads – confirmed the whole episode in ZS.1734.

page 279 According to the Hewel Ledger (see my note to page 271) two FA reports on the Italian talks with Sumner Welles were submitted to Hitler. Hewel endorsed the entry as follows: 'The Führer has instructed that the Italians are to be handed a protocol on the Sumner Welles talks with the Führer and the foreign minister [on Mar 2] conforming in length and content to that supplied by the Italians.' This mistrust was also plain in Hitler's directive on Apr 4 on strategic co-operation with Italy (PG/33316): 'Neither "Yellow" nor "Weserübung" [the invasion of Scandinavia] are to be discussed in any form before the operations begin.'

page 279 Apart from the German transcript, we have Mooney's own report on the meeting, in a lengthy telegram to Roosevelt on Mar 17 ('The President had disclosed to me that he was not interested in saying to the German people what they should do about their leaders or their government – that was their own affair.' Roosevelt had asked him to tell Hitler he was willing to act as 'moderator'; Hitler had responded he 'would be able to reach an agreement with President Roosevelt in ten minutes.') FDRL: PSF box 4.

page 280 In his speech to commanders on Apr 1, 1940, Hitler described their relations with Russia at present as favourable; but how long this would *remain* so could never be predicted (Appendix to war diary of XXI *Gruppe*).

page 282 Hitler referred to the incautious utterances of Churchill and Reynaud in conversation with the Norwegian envoy Arne Scheel and the Swedish admiral Fabian Tamm on Apr 13 and 16; in a letter to Mussolini on the 26th; and in his famous Reichstag speech of Jul 19, 1940; see also his remarks in Table Talk, Jul 1, 1942, evening.

page 283 The FA intercept is reported in the naval staff war diary, Apr 7, 1940. I also read the testimony of Major Sas (ZS.1626).

page 285 The naval attaché in Oslo lectured the naval staff in Berlin on Apr 21 that Norway would return to normal only if Hitler directed the troops to adopt the slogan 'We come as your friends to *protect* Norway' and did not attempt to repeat 'the Poland method' there. For the situation created by the king's defection, see Weizsäcker's and Hassell's diaries, and the report by one of Rosenberg's staff to Schmundt on Apr 17 (NS.43/25) and Hitler's talk with Quisling on Aug 18 (NG–2948).

page 286 Warlimont ordered Lossberg to write an account of Hitler's nervous actions for the OKW diary. Schmundt was aghast; as Lossberg later wrote: 'He felt it was sacrilege to write down one of the ostensibly infallible Führer's weak moments in black and white.' The page was stricken from the official diary text. To get behind the scenes at the OKW, I used not only Jodl's diary and Deyhle's notes of Apr 24 (1781–PS) but also manuscripts by Lossberg and by the navy captains Wolf Junge and Heinz Assmann on Jodl's staff, and interviews of Baron Sigismund von Falkenstein (his Luftwaffe staff officer) and General Ottomar Hansen (Keitel's adjutant).

page 288 Details of the British documents captured in Norway can be reconstructed from Jodl's diary, Apr 23–27; from the naval staff diary, Apr 27; from Hitler's letter to Mussolini on the 26th and from Goebbels's remarks at his ministerial conference the same day and on May 3 and 19; from Colonel Wagner's private letter of May 7; and from the AA's White Book on Apr 27, 1940.

page 290 On the FA intercepts, see Jodl's diary, the testimony of Sas, and Hermann Graml's study of the Oster affair in *VfZ*, 1966, pages 26 *et seq*. On May 8, 1940, there is also a cryptic reference in Tippelskirch's diary to alerts proclaimed in the Low Countries: 'Luxembourg: Telephone conversation [overheard on] May 6: 'Are they coming or aren't they?'' In the AA files of Ambassador von Mackensen (Rome) is extensive correspondence from May 17, 1940, to Jul 28, 1941, relating to the SD's attempts to identify the German citizen in Rome who had tipped off the Vatican's Father Robert Leiber, SJ, about 'Yellow' deadlines.

page 296 General von Trotha provided me with original documents. I also used the war diary of the Führer's HQ, diaries of Jodl and Tippelskirch, Hitler's Table Talk, Oct 17–18, 1941 (Heim's note), and Gerhard Schacht's study on Eben Emael in *WR*, 1954, pages 217 *et seq*.

page 298 The definitive account of the Luftwaffe attack on Rotterdam is still Professor H. A. Jacobsen's, in *WR*, 1958, pages 257 *et seq*.; and see Kesselring's interrogation by the USSBS.

page 301 That it never occurred to Hitler that the British army was decamping from Dunkirk and leaving the French in the lurch has escaped most historians; it is hinted at by Ulrich Liss – chief of Foreign Armies West at the time – in *WR*, 1958, pages 325 *et seq*., but neither Jacobsen (in *Allg. Schweizerische Militärzeitschrift*, 1953, page 845 and elsewhere) nor H. Meier-Welcker, in *VfZ*, 1954, pages 274 *et seq*., nor the British official historians L. F. Ellis and J. R. M. Butler grasped this point. The entry in the diary of Tippelskirch on May 31 – 'what picture emerged over the last few days to suggest that the British and French were embarking by sea?' – suggests that the belated search for a scapegoat was beginning.

page 301 That the initial decision to halt the tanks was Rundstedt's – and only subsequently given Hitler's blessing – is proven by the war diary of Rundstedt's Army Group A. Rundstedt indignantly denied it after the war, but the facts are plain. Late on May 24 an impatient Halder radioed permission to Army Groups A and B to attack Dunkirk. Rundstedt (Army Group A) refused, as 'the mechanised groups must first be allowed to pull themselves together.' His operations officer, Blumentritt, marked the file copy of Halder's signal, 'Submitted to OC [Rundstedt] and Chief of Staff, but not forwarded to Fourth Army as Führer wants OC Army Group A to decide.' This did not prevent Bock (diary) and Fourth Army (war diary, May 27) from attributing the order to Hitler. I also used the diaries of Jodl, Richthofen, Waldau, and Halder; the interrogations of Halder, Kesselring, Scheidt, Jodl, Warlimont, Rundstedt and Heusinger; and the memoirs of Keitel, Lossberg and Junge.

page 303 Himmler's written proposal for dealing with the eastern populations is in his files (T175/119/5133 *et seq.*). The document was rediscovered twenty years later by Christopher R. Browning in his *Paths to Genocide* (Canto edition, 1995), page 17. Himmler, he says, noted that 'the Führer read the six pages through and found them very good and correct.' Himmler's notes for the meeting with Hitler give a good impression of his varied interests. '(1) Chief of SS and Police for Holland: Bach or Rauter? ("Warmly approves of Rauter, because Austrian"). (2) Pistol with spotlights. (3) Identity photos (Waffen SS). (4) Book by Divinger, Atrocities in Poland. (5) Memorandum on Poland. ("Not yet read"). (6) Legal proceedings against [British agents] Best and Stevens. ("Führer will fix the date")' (T175/94/5221). A genesis of these ideas will be found in Himmler's speech notes of Mar 13, 1940. For Hitler's broadly similar views, note his remark in Table Talk, Feb 4, 1942 (Heim's note): 'Wherever in the world there is some Germanic blood, we'll be taking the best of it for ourselves.'

page 304 My account of Hitler's speech of Jun 2 at Charleville is based on Leeb's diary; but also on the accounts by Rommel, Weichs, Bock and Salmuth. See too Blumentritt's, GRGG.313(C).

page 305 For Leopold's fury, see Army Group B's telex to the OKH on May 31, 1940 (Weizsäcker's AA files, serial 141).

page 306 Hitler's caustic comments about Italy were reported by General Thomas (1456–PS), Weizsäcker in a letter of Jun 5 and diary Jul 10, Junge and Puttkamer.

page 307 The only record of Hitler's private talk with Mussolini is in Italian, in the Duce's handwriting (Mussolini papers, T586/406/769 *et seq.*). He talked with Hitler about the French fleet, but Hitler had persuaded him that modern bombers rendered big warships obsolete. 'Since France wanted this war and declared it on us, despite my repeated offers of agreement,' continued Hitler, 'my terms will be such as to solve once and for all the outstanding problems' – and he pointed to the Colmar–Mühlhausen area on the map, indicating that the present (German) inhabitants of the South Tyrol would be resettled there. For Russia Hitler expressed only 'enormous contempt.' He concluded: 'Now Germany can be compared with a lucky and audacious gambler, who has kept winning but kept on doubling his stake. Now he is a little bit nervous – and wants to take home his winnings quickly.' Waldau's diary, Jun 20, reports that the Führer returned to HQ 'bitterly upset about the complete inactivity of the Italians.'

page 307 Admiral Puttkamer heard – and told me of – Hitler's refusal to Raeder to assign the French fleet to Germany.

page 307 In Weizsäcker's files is a detailed list of all the 'insulting and degrading conditions of the Versailles Treaty' drawn up for comparative purposes (serial 1892H).

page 308 Hitler had learnt the dimensions of the world's principal theatres by heart, from the British architect Sachs's *Modern Opera Houses and Theatres*.

page 309 Telegrams of congratulation are in files NS.10/18 and /19.

page 310 Canaris reported his talk

with Hitler on Jun 11 (T77/1450/0899).

page 311 On Jul 1, 1940, one of Ribbentrop's officials learned that 'the Führer has directed that as little as possible is to be committed to paper about the whole business' – meaning his secret plans for annexing French territory. The official promptly wrote this down (Weizsäcker's files, serial 1892H). A well-informed study is Pierre Crenesse, *Le Procès deWagner* (Paris, 1946). See the naval staff diary, Jun 2, 1940, and Goebbels's unpublished diary, May 30, 1942 – Hitler told him that Brabant, Belgium, and Flanders were to become German Gaue and that the Netherlands and France were to be thrown back to 'the frontiers of 1500.'

page 312 Streckenbach is quoted verbatim in Hans Frank's diary, Jul 31, 1940. On the Madagascar plan see Hitler's conference with Raeder on Jun 20, 1940. On the 24th Heydrich wrote reminding Ribbentrop that he had been promoting Jewish emigration on Göring's instructions since Jan 1939; two hundred thousand had already emigrated, and he asked the AA to inform him should there be any conferences on the 'Final Solution of the Jewish Problem.' In fact an AA file with this title had existed since 1938, serial 1513. Ribbentrop's staff had pressed him since Jun 3 at least to lay down Germany's policy on Jews – for example they might all be excluded from Europe; or the eastern Jews might be sorted out from the western Jews; or they might be given a national home in Palestine. On the Madagascar idea see *inter alia* Rademacher's AA memo of Jul 3; Goebbels diary, Jul 26; Hitler's talk with Ambassador Abetz on Aug 3 (NG–1838); Luther's AA memo of Aug 15, 1940, and again of Aug 21, 1942 ('The RSHA enthusiastically adopted the Madagascar plan'); and Hitler's talk with Count Teleki on Nov 20, 1940.

page 313 According to Curt Siewert, Brauchitsch's staff officer, it was Brauchitsch who first egged Hitler on to tackle Russia (IfZ, zs.345). Late on Jun 21, 1940, the AA cabled the military attaché in Moscow to be on guard for the first signs of Russian aggression against Romania, as Halder was 'urgently interested.' See J. W. Brügel's study on the Soviet ultimatum to Romania, in *VfZ*, 1963, pages 404 *et seq*.

page 315 Many of the captured French documents were published in an AA White Book on the origins of the air war in 1943. Many are now in Weizsäcker's AA files, serial 121, page 119942. See the files of Woermann, 'War West II,' for 104 more of the captured Allied documents.

page 316 Invited by British officers to comment on his diary, Halder volunteered, *re* Jul 2, 1940 ('The Commander in Chief has flown to Berlin') the remark: 'About this time Commander in Chief, Army, asked me to begin operational thinking about Russia.' *Re* the entry of Jul 3 ('Greiffenberg must take over as my deputy [O.Qu.I]'), Halder commented for the British: 'For the planned operation in Russia.' The political situation was already acute, as the naval staff diary, Jul 5, demonstrates. 'Early further advances by Russians feared, objective: Bolshevisation of the Balkans . . .' Halder's frank commentary proves that the General Staff showed more interest in attacking Rus-

sia than has hitherto been supposed.

page 316 Lossberg described the origins of his study for a Russian campaign ('Fritz') in a private letter of Sep 7, 1956. He had omitted this from his memoirs ('which were heavily altered by the publishers anyway'); Greiner, the OKW war diarist, had urged him to make Hitler appear solely responsible. In a speech to gauleiters on Nov 7, 1943 (ND, 172–L) Jodl admitted: 'The Führer himself. . . apprised me as early as during the western campaign of his fundamental decision to tackle this [Soviet] danger as soon as our military situation made it at all possible.'

page 316 Lossberg, Jodl, and Puttkamer all stressed that Hitler perceived a need to tackle Russia while the German people were still in the mood. On Feb 17, 1941, Halder quoted Hitler as saying, 'If Britain were finished, he would never manage to summon up the German nation against Russia again; so Russia must be dealt with first.' As Hitler said in his famous speech of Dec 12, 1944, 'You can't extract enthusiasm and self-sacrifice like something tangible, and bottle them and preserve them. They are generated just once in the course of a revolution, and will gradually die away.'

page 316 His refusal to unleash the Luftwaffe against England appears in many documents. Major von Etzdorf noted on Jul 10, 1940: 'Britain, three options: *Air war*: Führer opposed, as desires to draw up fresh requests; foreign minister in favour. *Blockade*: Führer in favour, hopes for effect within two and a half months. [*Peace*] *offer*: Reichstag has been postponed *sine die* . . .' And Tippelskirch noted similarly that Hitler was weighing several possibilities: 'Fresh rubble heaps [*i.e.*, bombing war]; intensification of blockade? – Two months [suffice]. Ri[bbentrop] tougher line. Late autumn Russia?' On Jul 16, Major Etzdorf noted: 'Britain: common sense may have to be bludgeoned into them.'

page 318 I used Walter Schellenberg's unpublished memoirs – the handwriting is daunting but not illegible – and the Tippelskirch diary, Jul 11, 1940, in following the Duke of Windsor episode.

page 318 The most important FA intercepts were communicated to the German ambassador in Moscow and are in his embassy's files; remarkably, most have not been published. Echoes of them can be traced in the Etzdorf, Halder, and Tippelskirch diaries. A summary of them will be found in Pol. V files in AA archives, serial 104, pages 113176 *et seq*.

page 319 OKW files reflect the economic chaos caused by the withdrawal of barges for invasion preparations. By Jul 22 a thousand German barges had been requisitioned, and nine hundred more in Holland and Belgium (T77/201/7513).

page 306 On Jul 15, 1940, Papen warned that Stalin had 180 divisions available. General Halder's experts were more optimistic; Colonel Eberhard Kinzel (Foreign Armies East) allowed the Russians 20 infantry, 4 cavalry and 4 mechanised divisions or brigades in Poland; 20 infantry, 4 cavalry divisions and 6 mechanised brigades in the Baltic states; 15 infantry divisions in Finland; and 15 infantry, 9 cavalry divisions and 10 mechanised brigades in the annexed part of Romania (AL/

1367).

page 321 Hitler's private meeting with Jodl was certainly between Jul 27 and 30. I relied on Jodl's various post-war accounts and on what he told his staff – Warlimont, Lossberg, Falkenstein, and Junge.

page 323 According to the – unpublished – dispatch of the German minister in Paris on Aug 3, the Duchess's French lady-in-waiting reported that 'the Duke has no intention of embarking to take up his new post but will await further events in Europe in Lisbon.' This bore out the reports of the German envoys – Eberhard von Stohrer in Madrid and Baron Oswald von Hoyningen Huene in Lisbon.

page 325 Raeder admitted Hitler had duped him, in a note for the naval staff historian K. Assmann, Apr 10, 1944 (PG/33945b). Although Hitler was explicit on Jul 31, 1940, about his intention to attack Russia, it is buried in the OKW diary of Greiner thus: 'For further utterances of the Führer to Army Commander in Chief see [Warlimont's] note of Aug 1.'

Eberhard recalled in 1970 that when Greiner visited OKH headquarters at Fontainebleau in the summer of 1940 he hinted to the Luftwaffe liaison team there that there was to be no invasion of England. 'You'll see next spring why nobody's putting any weight into it.' And on Aug 6, Tippelskirch – Halder's chief of Intelligence – noted: 'Engel [Hitler's army adjutant] says, Führer has powerful hang-up [over England] . . . If no decision this autumn, lock up shop until May.' After Hitler's speech on Aug 14 the chief of naval operations approached Jodl thus: 'Should the Führer inwardly have resolved not to execute [the invasion of Britain], we propose it should be called off so as to take the pressure off our economy, while keeping this top secret. In its place a special deception operation should be mounted to maintain the threat on the enemy' (German naval staff war diary).

page 327 Weizsäcker was not pleased by Hitler's move into Romania. He wrote in his diary on Sep 1, 1940: 'Our relations with Russia are beginning to suffer. Molotov announces that the Arbitration Award between Hungary and Romania violates last year's [German–Soviet] pact – the joint consultation requirement. Of course it's our guarantee to Romania that the Russians regard as an obstacle and a slight to them. There'll be more slights yet, as we're beginning to favour Finland and to occupy northern Norway in force. In my own view this is exposing our hand too soon, because we still have eight months ahead of us in which we can't properly get to military grips with Russia.' Schmundt's flight to approve an HQ site in East Prussia – the later famous Wolf's Lair – is fixed by his widow's diary as Aug 27–29, 1940; Halder's diary shows that the army had begun looking by Aug 14.

page 328 From a Californian, I obtained in 1998 the Gestapo interrogations of the SS officers on Rudolf Hess's staff, conducted mainly May 18–22, 1941. These had been stolen from the Nuremberg Palace of Justice in 1945 by a US officer. The interrogations are of SS *Hauptsturmführer* Kriminalrat Franz Lutz; SS *Obersturmführer* Günther Sorof, his adjutant (believing that this was a Führer-secret, Sorof first told the Ges-

tapo he had known nothing until the news bulletin in Hess's flight. Assured that Hitler had known nothing, Sorof later admitted that Pintsch had told him on Apr 20, 1941); SS *Untersturmführer* Rudolf Lippert, his driver; and SS *Oberscharführer* Josef Platzer, his valet. Bormann wanted the People's Court to try them, but on Jul 27, 1941 SS *Obergruppenführer* Karl Wolff noted that Bormann had ruled against any trial until 'the Führer himself has reached a decision on the Rudolf Hess case.'

page 329 On Weissauer's peace mission, see Bernd Martin, *Friedensinitiativen und Machtpolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Düsseldorf, 1976), pages 342 *et seq*. The British archives are silent on this peace feeler, but the Stockholm telegrams were fortunately repeated to Lord Lothian in Washington (FDRL, PSF box 4).

page 330 For the intercepted letter, see PRO file INF. 1/912.

page 330 See Professor A. Haushofer's note on his conversation with Rudolf Hess on Sep 8, 1940 (T253/46/9921) and Walter Stubbe's memorial essay in *VfZ*, 1960, pages 246 *et seq*.

page 331 On Aug 29, 1940, the naval staff prepared for Admiral Raeder a survey on 'Warfare against Britain if "Sea Lion" [the invasion] is dropped' (PG/31762C). Raeder discussed it with Hitler on Sep 6.

page 331 I used mainly Milch's transcript of Hitler's secret conference of Sep 14, 1940; but also Halder's diary, the OKW and naval staff diaries. In a speech the day before, Hitler had already come out against an invasion of England, according to the OKW diary; General von Weichs recalled Hitler's closing words as: 'The war is all but over. I no longer need to take such a risk.'

page 332 Jodl's order of Sep 6, 1940, included the ambiguous words, 'The impression must not be allowed to arise in Russia from these redeployments that we are preparing an eastern offensive.'

page 332 Lossberg's operations study 'East' (Fritz), of Sep 15, 1940, is in Moscow archives and published by L. Bezymenski in *Sonderakte Barbarossa*, pages 307 *et seq*.

page 336 Hitler's phrase 'fraud on a grand scale' is quoted by Weizsäcker and appears in the notes of Etzdorf, Halder, and Tippelskirch as well at this time.

page 339 Although Mussolini's letter is dated 'Oct 19, 1940,' Hewel's receipt, signed in Hitler's train at Montoire, shows it did not arrive until the 24th (AA files, Büro RAM). The original teletype from Ribbentrop's train *Heinrich* is in Hewel's private papers.

page 339 The available documents suggest that – perhaps on Oct 4, 1940 – Hitler had given Mussolini a free hand to act against Greece, but in the distant future and only if unavoidable. On Oct 21 Weizsäcker noted (diary): 'We're not restraining the Italian intention of dropping on Greece soon. Axis loyalty.' On Oct 23 the OKW diary noted Jodl's suspicion that the Führer had agreed without telling his closer staff. This was echoed by the naval staff diary on the 25th, while Weizsäcker noted that day that Mussolini 'announces he'll intervene in Greece simultaneously with next offensive against Egypt.' See the naval staff file PG/33316, Tippelskirch's diary with its minute-by-minute account of Oct 28, Badoglio's memoirs, and Karl Ritter's memo of Nov 7, 1940

(NG–3303).

page 340 Tippelskirch wrote on Nov 1, 1940: 'Führer in filthy temper about Greece. [Italians are] just amateurs, getting nowhere. Duce complains about his generals, if only he had some like ours.'

page 341 Etzdorf analysed the divergence of German and Italian policy on Nov 14, 1940, in these terms: 'Italians want to state their claims [on French territories] right now. Führer against this as France would then drift away, as she wouldn't swallow [loss of] Corsica and Tunisia. Hitler wants to play it cool, there's still time yet, forbids [Ribbentrop] to let Ciano raise the matter if he meets Laval and Ciano. Question: Peace with Britain at France's or Italy's expense?'

page 344 Hitler allowed his ministers to spread the impression that the Molotov talks had gone harmoniously. (Evidence of this is in Raeder's files, PG/31762C; in naval staff diary, Nov 16; in Weizsäcker's circular to diplomatic missions, Nov 15; in the diaries of Halder and Tippelskirch). Goebbels's press directive of Nov 14 was unctuous in its tone. But Himmler was more succinct to Party leaders on Nov 28, 1940. 'Upshot is: all treaties and economic agreements are to be exploited to the full; then shaken off the moment they become a burden after the war and lose their importance.'

page 347 German records on the British operational plans in Ireland will be found in Etzdorf's file ('Misc.') and the diaries of the OKW, the naval staff, Tippelskirch, and Halder.

page 349 Hitler still smarted under Franco's rebuff three years later. He described Franco's excuses as 'threadbare' to Hewel, who wrote in a letter of Feb 1, 1944: 'At the time the Führer commented, "The man has missed the historic chance offered him by fate."' In January 1944, Hewel supplied Hitler with a comparison of Spain's 1940 'minimum existence' demands, and the actual supplies the Allies had since made to her, 'which had enabled her not only to survive but to rebuild her economy."' Thus in 1940 Franco had demanded 103,000 tons of petroleum a month; but in the whole of 1942 the Allies had supplied only 15,000 tons.

page 351 The final 'Barbarossa' directive of Dec 18, 1940, was an awkward compromise between the OKW and General Staff proposals.

page 352 Goebbels's speech draft – amended in Hitler's handwriting – is in BA file NS.10/37.

page 356 In describing the North African campaign I have used Rommel's private and official papers and diaries; the diary of General Heinrich Kirchheim; and those of Rommel's interpreter Armbruster and of the *Comando Supremo*. The reader's attention is drawn to my subsequent full-length biography of Rommel, *The Trail of the Fox* (New York and London, 1977).

page 342 The oil factor in the 'Barbarossa' campaign is emphasised in the war diary of Keitel's OKW economics staff (T77/668). I have also relied throughout 1941 on Göring's diary (my transcript is now in IfZ).

page 360 Rommel's correspondence with his wife and with Colonel Schmundt reveals his dependence on Hitler. Thus on Mar 3, 1941, he wrote: 'Major Grünow brought back from Berlin the Führer's greetings and news that

he is delighted at the change in our fortunes since my arrival and intervention here. He supports my actions to the hilt. That pleased me, it gives me strength to do greater deeds.'

page 363 The Soviet embassy in Paris: Heydrich's report to Ribbentrop, dated Jul 2, 1941, is in Weizsäcker's file, serial 105. In Ritter's AA file, serial 1386, page 358996, is Canaris's report ('A side wing of the embassy was equipped as a GPU base complete with instruments for torturing, executions, and the disposal of corpses.') Colonel Lahousen's own eyewitness description is in AL/1933. Hewel's Ledger shows the reports went to Hitler on Jul 25; Goebbels also refers to them in his diary of Aug 10, 1941 (T84/267).

page 368 Paula Hitler was interrogated at Berchtesgaden on May 26, 1945. Answers by her to a very lengthy questionnaire are currently in the hands of American collector William Rasmussen, of Michigan.

page 368 Ribbentrop, in *Zwischen London und Moskau*, page 224, recalls Hitler describing the Yugoslav ministers' gloom 'as though they were at a funeral.' Under German interrogation, Dragizha Tsvetkovic and his secretary related that when he was forced to abdicate a few days later Prince Paul declared he was convinced that an alliance with Britain would result in the ruination of their country (AA, files of task force Künsberg, serial 2013H, pages 443373 *et seq.*).

page 369 The events of Mar 27–28, 1941, are described from the diaries of Halder, Göring, Hewel, Waldau, and the German records of Hitler's talks with Sztójay and Parvan Draganoff; Hungarian records in the National Archives of Budapest; and the OKW note on Hitler's conference of Mar 27 (1746–PS). The FA intercept was described by Rasche in an interrogation (RG.226, file XE 4896).

page 369 The immediate fear of the naval staff (war diary, Apr 3, 1941) was, 'Thanks to the Balkan operation "Operation B[arbarossa]" is going to be held up by around five weeks, initially.' That the heavy rains would in fact have delayed it anyway becomes clear from the post-war testimony of Heusinger, Gyldenfeldt and others.

page 370 The German record of Hitler's most important meetings with the Japanese ambassador and foreign minister has not always survived, but the Japanese texts of Oshima's cables are in Tokyo archives, usefully translated into German in *WR*, 1968, pages 312 *et seq.*, and a complete series of the Allied intercepts of Oshima's dispatches on meetings with Hitler, Göring, Ribbentrop *et al.* is in NA, RG.457 (SRH- and SRDJ–series).

page 371 Summaries of Hitler's secret speech of Mar 30, 1941, are in the diaries of Bock, Halder, Waldau, and Milch, and in the war diaries of the OKW and naval staff and the latter's volume C of appendices (Part VII). Raeder was pleased by Hitler's undertaking to expand the German battle fleet 'after the army's major tasks had been dealt with.' (On Apr 7, General Friedrich Fromm's Chief of Staff was to note in his diary Brauchitsch's statement: '"Barbarossa" on Jun 22 or 23. Create operational reserve. . . What happens after "Barbarossa" is dealt with? Schwerpunkt switches to navy and Luftwaffe.')

page 373 Colonel von Lossberg delivered a useful lecture on the Balkan campaign as early as May 5, 1941 (T77/792).

page 375 The difficulties with the Italians are eloquently recapitulated in a memo by the German military attaché, Rintelen, dated Apr 23, 1941, in Ritter's AA files. On Apr 28, Keitel explained to Canaris: 'The Führer has disclaimed any interest in the Balkan affairs, and is leaving these questions entirely up to the Italians. . . We want to see the Italians – who are just like children, wanting to gobble up everything – spoil their appetite with things they just can't digest. For the time being we must control our temper to the utmost, and above all do nothing in those territories that might be interpreted in any way as being anti-Italian. Otherwise, the Führer regards himself – as far as the Croats are concerned – as an Austrian' (Lahousen diary).

page 377 Weizsäcker recorded in his diary: 'Schulenburg was alone with the Führer, instructed – by Ribbentrop – to outline to him the view "as seen from Moscow". . .The Führer saw him barely thirty minutes and described his military preparations as defensive, rather as he did to Matsuoka.' Months later Goebbels would mockingly note in his diary that Schulenburg steadfastly refused to believe the enormous military preparations being made by Stalin against Germany. On Apr 29 Weizsäcker explained in his diary: 'Ribbentrop is basically averse to the war because of his so recent speeches in favour of friendship with Russia.' On May 1, 1941, he noted with resignation: 'Ribbentrop has now come out in writing in favour of the war against Russia in a letter to the Führer. He reproaches me for being negative about yet one more Great Decision.'

page 379 Eden visited Athens from Mar 30. In *The Reckoning*, page 200, he suggests that he learned there of what Hitler told Prince Paul. Eden repeated it on Apr 6 both to London and to the British ambassador in Athens, who stated that Eden had learned it via King George II of Greece from Prince Paul (see AA's cable to Ritter, Apr 18, 1941, AA serial 4467, page E221085). Meanwhile on Apr 2 the Abwehr learned from agents in the Soviet embassy in Berlin that Moscow was convinced that war with Germany was a certainty: 'The war is inevitable, as sure as two times two is four' (T77/792/1141).

page 379 Stalin's embrace is described in telegrams from Moscow (PG/33738), the Weizsäcker diary, and Table Talk, Jul 27, 1942; Hewel also showed Hitler a Forschungsamt report on 'Incidents on Matsuoka's departure from Moscow.'

page 379 The charred, undated memo by Canaris on Jodl's cynical disclosure is transcribed in AL/1933.

page 380 The naval staff war diary, Mar 27, 1941, punctuates the Soviet warship statistics with double exclamation marks. Himmler referred to the Soviet arms production effort in a speech to gauleiters on Aug 3, 1944. 'The very fact that this Mr Stalin had stocked up with twenty thousand tanks speaks for itself. So does everything we then found by way of troop concentrations and preparations.' In fact – as John Erickson, *The Soviet High Command* (London, 1962), pages 584 *et seq.*, states – in June 1941

Stalin had organised twenty-four thousand tanks in sixty tank-brigades or divisions.

page 381 Stalin's secret speeches of May 5, 1941, are reported in AA files, serials 1083 and 1699; see also Ribbentrop's remarks to the Bulgarians on Oct 19, 1943; interrogations of Göring and Ribbentrop; and Weichs's memoirs, N.1919.

page 383 The reader's attention is drawn to my *Hess, The Missing Years* (Macmillan Ltd., London, 1987). Hess was interrogated several *hundred* times in Britain: reports are in ND (*e.g.*, M.117, 118). In the late 1990s the British FO released another file on him (PRO file FO.371/26565, 'Flight of Rudolf Hess to Scotland, 1941'); the British Secret Service also released its files (PRO series FO.1093): files 1–20 contain his conversations with others, May–Jun 1941, and translations of his letters 1941–1945.

I also used the Beaverbrook papers, House of Lords, file D443; Sir John Simon papers, Bodleian library, Oxford; Malcolm Scott papers, IWM; PRO, PREM.3/219/5; and the diaries of Göring, Goebbels, Bormann, Hewel, Halder, and Weizsäcker, and Goebbels's ministerial conferences, and the unpublished memoirs of Below, Schellenberg, Schaub, Ley, and Linge – the latter in Russian archives; and post-war testimonies of Speer, Bohle, Darré, Puttkamer, Dr. Erich Isselhorst, and Hess's secretary Laura Schrödl. General Bodenschatz amplified his account in an interview in 1970.

page 387 The official Party statement late on May 12, 1941, ran: 'Despite a strict order from the Führer forbidding any further flying activity, on account of a progressive illness from which Party-member Hess has suffered for some years, he recently managed to get possession of an aircraft again. Toward 6 P.M. on Sunday, May 10, Hess took off from Augsburg on a flight from which he has not returned. A letter he left behind is so incoherent as to give evidence of a mental derangement, which gives rise to fears that he is the victim of hallucinations. The Führer has ordered the immediate arrest of the adjutants of Hess, who alone knew of his flight and despite the Führer's orders did nothing to hinder or report it. Under the circumstances it is to be feared that Party-member Hess has crashed or met with an accident somewhere.' Not until 6 A.M. on May 13 did the BBC announce that Hess was on British soil, speciously adding: 'Great Britain is the only country in which Hess felt safe from the Gestapo.' The original file of Gestapo (RSHA) interrogations of Hess's staff is in private hands in California; I have a complete copy.

page 390 Dr. Robert Ley wrote privately in August 1945: 'I found a number of reasons to suspect that Bormann at least knew of the strange flight to Britain. For example, his complete indifference to the Führer's deep emotion during that remarkable assembly at the Berghof [on May 13, 1941] where the Führer told us – as shattered as he was – of Hess's act and passed judgement on it. Bormann was ice-cold, as though it did not affect him in the least; indeed some seemed to detect signs of pleasure in him' (from Ley's private papers).

page 392 The timely death of Gauleiter Röver: see Heydrich's letter

to Himmler, May 13, 1942 (T175/139/7452 *et seq.*).

page 393 Professor Andreas Hillgruber has published several studies on the structure of Hitler's coalition war – *e.g.*, in *WR*, 1960, pages 659 *et seq.*; see too Hitler's order of May 1, 1941 (T77/792/1209, and in files PG/31025), and the files of General Staff and OKW conferences with the Finns on T78/458, and Ritter's AA files, serial 833. As Ernst Klink points out in his study of the German–Finnish coalition, in *WR*, 1958, page 391, Field Marshal Mannerheim's memoirs are reticent on the extent of Finland's collaboration with Hitler in the preparation of 'Barbarossa.' On Schnurre's mission, see the interrogation of Johannes Metzger, Feb 14, 1946 (SIR. 14).

page 394 Puttkamer told me, in interviews in 1967 and 1968, of Hitler's uneasiness upon learning that *Bismarck* had sailed. Captain Wolf Junge, Jodl's naval aide, also wrote of it in his unpublished memoirs, and it is indirectly confirmed by the naval staff's war diary on Jun 7 – two weeks later. 'He [the Führer] requests to be informed *in advance* of future naval staff decisions on the operations of surface warships!'

page 394 The naval staff war diary of May 13, 1941 bears eloquent testimony to Hitler's determination to avoid war with the United States: the German navy was to use extreme caution when American ships were concerned, even if this put the German sailors at a disadvantage, 'as the Führer has no intention whatever of provoking an American entry into the war by some incident or other at the present moment.' This determination was reiterated on May 22 (*ibid.*)

page 396 That *Bismarck* scuttled herself – and was not 'sunk' – was later confirmed by Captain Junak, her turbine officer, who himself opened the sea cocks.

page 397 There is a wealth of detail on the hitherto neglected Iraq affair in Hewel's diary. On May 30, 1941, Hitler realised that the German force might be ejected from Iraq, but told Hewel: 'The last to leave must be the Germans, particularly if Italians are still fighting there. The Mossul position is important as an attack base during "Barbarossa".' On May 31, Hewel recorded a long conference of Hitler, Keitel, Jodl, and Ribbentrop from 9 A.M. onward, unusually early because the Iraqis were demanding to know whether Germany could aid them or not by 1 A.M. The British had a hundred tanks there; but Turkey was refusing permission to Germany to send in tanks and guns. After a further evening conference with Ribbentrop, Göring, Jeschonnek, Keitel, and Jodl, the Führer decided he could not help although 'we must realise that if we retract the whole Arab uprising will die out.' Hewel noted: 'Meantime a telegram arrives from Mossul announcing the collapse of resistance there; so there is nothing else to discuss.'

page 398 Halder exuded confidence when army chiefs of staff met for an OKH conference on Jun 4, 1941. The Russian deployment on the frontier was purely defensive, he said. 'The whole fight may take several days, or perhaps even a considerable number of days; but then there will follow a vacuum, if the enemy retains his present formation,

and he will scarcely have time to change it now' (Appendix to Seventeenth Army war diary, BA file 14,499/5).

page 399 Hitler's 'Barbarossa' hint to Mussolini is confirmed in the German embassy's telegram from Rome to Berlin on Jun 22, 1941: 'As the Duce claims to have told the Führer already, during their last conference at the Brenner [on Jun 2], he completely shares the Führer's view that the Russian problem demands an immediate solution, and that if this cannot be attained by negotiations then it must be by force.' Later Mussolini changed his tune – claiming to have warned the Führer 'early in 1941' against a Russian campaign (Weizsäcker diary, Feb 7, 1943).

page 399 Hitler's similar hint to Oshima is also recorded in Hewel's diary, Jun 3, 1941. 'Berghof . . . Führer spends afternoon with Reichsmarschall. 7 P.M. Oshima: [Führer] hints at "Barbarossa". I write the protocol.' Dr. Bernd Martin summarises in *Deutschland und Japan im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart, 1967), page 97, the Japanese-language sources confirming that Oshima understood the hint.

page 400 Key documents on the 'Commissar' Order will be found on microfilms T77/792 and t78/458. I also used the Nuremberg documents 1471–PS, 2884–PS, NOKW–209, NOKW–484, NOKW–1076, NOKW–3357 and 886–PS. As Keitel admitted to his son, in a private talk in his Nuremberg death cell on Sep 25, 1946: 'Jawohl, I know it was wrong. But either we won, or it was all over for the German nation anyway' (Keitel family papers).

page 403 Hitler recalled his warning to Göring, both in conversation with Marshal Antonescu on Jan 10, 1943, and in a secret speech to his generals on May 26, 1944 (T175/94/4963). Below also quoted the warning in his unpublished memoirs.

page 405 On Hitler's interim plan to dump western Europe's Jews in Hans Frank's Generalgouvernement, see Lammers's letter to Schirach, Dec 3, 1940 (1950–PS); General Alfred Streccius's letter to General Fromm, Feb 24, 1941 (BA, RH1/v. 58); Bormann's memo of Oct 2, 1940 (USSR-172), and the corresponding entries in Hans Frank's diary on Oct 27 and 31, Nov 6, 1940, Jan 11, and Jul 17, 1941; Rosenberg's speech of Jun 20, 1941 is in CO file AL/1933; see also the war diaries of the OKW, Jun 20, and naval staff, Jun 21, 1941.

page 407 A private letter of Hitler's adjutant Albrecht on Saturday Jun 21, 1941, reveals the late hours that were kept. 'The tempo since then has been hectic, with me on duty until 2:30 A.M. on Thursday, until 3:30 A.M. yesterday, and today it's going to be late – that is, early – again.' As for Hitler's final decision to attack – Jodl's relevant signal of Jun 20 is in naval file PG/31025 – years later Hitler's staff still recalled how he sweated over it. Hewel wrote privately on Feb 1, 1944: 'The decision which the Führer had to take, to attack Russia, was unimaginably tough, and he had to take it quite alone. He grappled for months with it before making his mind up to go ahead.'

page 411 The Abwehr's clandestine operations had contributed heavily to the initial success of 'Barbarossa.' Important bridges were seized in advance by the 'Brandenburg' Regiment, and

held until Leeb's main force arrived. Abwehr-trained Lithuanian activists lost some four hundred dead in similar operations to secure twenty-four key bridges along the attack route of the Sixteenth Army. See Lahousen's diary, Jun 28, and Jul 10, 1941, and Colonel Erwin Stolze's written testimony of Dec 25, 1945 (ND, USSR-231).

page 416 On Jul 26, 1941, Etzdorf noted that Hitler had decided 'Sweden is to be "left to fall by the wayside," since she doesn't want to join the Axis.'

page 417 Hitler's order of Jul 13, 1941, will be found in naval file PG/32020. The order of Jul 14 is on film T77/545.

page 417 Weizsäcker recognised Hitler's long-term aim of war with the New World. On Aug 13, 1941 he wrote in his diary: '"People" think that Germany and Britain are winning such mutual admiration in the present duel that sometime later they will march together against the USA.' And on Sep 15: 'England is the country of "our" [*i.e.*, Hitler's] respect. Indeed almost of "our" love. To advance with her against the USA – that is the dream of the future.' Careful readers will also find traces of Hitler's aim in his talk with Ciano on Oct 25, 1941.

page 417 Lieutenant Jacob Jugashvili, Stalin's son from his first marriage, committed suicide in 1943 after British fellow-prisoners made life unbearable for him (see US State Dept. files). His interrogations are in AA files, serial 1386, pages 358994 *et seq.*; and see Hitler's Table Talk, May 18–19, 1942.

page 418 On the unknown Russian tanks, see the war diary of Army Group North, Jun 24–25 (T311/53); the Waldau diary, Jul 3 and 15; Halder's diary, Jul 24–25; Hitler's remarks to Oshima on Jul 14, and to Goebbels (unpublished diary, Aug 18, 1941).

page 418 Lahousen's memo of Jul 20, 1941 is in AL/1933. Later, Canaris indignantly propagated the self-defence that he had predicted the Russian tank potential but that nobody had listened to him (Goebbels diary, Apr 9, 1943).

page 418 Stalin's speech will be found in BA file NS.26/V.1194. See Table Talk on Jul 11–12, 1941, and particularly the passage in Bormann's note on the meeting of Jul 16 (1221–PS) quoting Hitler: 'The Russians have now issued orders for partisan warfare behind our lines. But this has its advantages – it enables us to exterminate anybody who stands in our way.'

page 419 Rundstedt wrote on Jul 20: 'Today Halder was here with very far reaching plans, but I don't like to think ahead of the next but one' (HL, Lerner papers: DE.416 DIS.202). In Marshal Antonescu's papers (ND, USSR–237) is the letter Hitler wrote him on Jul 27, 1941, explaining that he was not trying to capture territory. 'It may be easy enough for the Russians to replace men; to replace well-trained combat troops is not so easy for them, while the replacement of arms and material on this scale is quite impossible, particularly once we have occupied their main production centres.' Besides, as Hitler explained to Minister Fritz Todt on Jun 20, Germany had not yet attained self-sufficiency in certain raw materials, and had to conquer those regions of Russia for that purpose (2353–PS, and Todt diary).

page 420 Bormann's note on Hitler's

conference of Jul 16, 1941, survives (1221–PS); I also used Colonel Georg Thomas's papers; he learned on Jul 17: 'The Führer desires that no military power factor should remain west of the Urals' (T77/441). Otto Bräutigam's diary is in the Library of Congress manuscripts division; I also used interrogations of Rosenberg, Lammers, and Göring; and Etzdorf's notes of Jul 16 and Aug 12 1941. Hitler's decrees resulting from the conference are on films T77/545 and t175/145.

page 422 On the Lithuanian pogroms, see the war diary of Army Group North; Hitler's talk with Kvaternik on Jul 22, 1941; and the report of the AA liaison officer in Riga on Apr 5, 1943 (serial 1513, pages 372208 *et seq*.). Hitler frequently used the 'Jewish bacillus' imagery, *e.g.*, in his talk with Horthy on Apr 17, 1943. See in this connection IfZ, 1965, pages 121 *et seq*.

page 423 Weizsäcker, who saw Ribbentrop for the first time after six weeks on Sep 5, 1941, wrote in his diary: '[Ribbentrop] asked me to avoid anything that might give the Führer – who's immersed in military affairs – cause for political worry; his health has temporarily suffered from the bunker life, so we must spare him every anxiety we can. He, Ribbentrop, is only feeding good news to him too. He says that following on our victory in Russia the Führer's planning to advance southward, probably into Iran or Egypt.' Ribbentrop admitted however that the strength of the Russian resistance had surprised him.

page 425 Rundstedt wrote on Aug 6: 'Our VIP came at 7, stayed until 11, it all went harmoniously. . . For political reasons Anton [Antonescu] looks as though he's independent commander although I'm responsible for the operations and he kindly does as I say. In about ten days Adolf will be back here with Benito, probably at Uman, our next stop' (see note to page 419.)

page 426 In 1981 Morell's diaries, in excruciating handwriting, were handed to NA, Washington, which *partly* filmed them on T253/62 (omitting *e.g.*, the 1944 notebook; 1945; and the menu cards). I transcribed, translated, and annotated the entire diaries in *The Secret Diaries of Adolf Hitler's Doctor* (London and New York, 1983).

page 427 I had Hitler's electrocardiograms reinterpreted by a competent British expert, who also noted a progressive abnormality of repolarisation, of which in a man of fifty-one the most likely cause would be coronary artery disease.

page 428 For a discussion between an American and Guderian on the strategic issues (Moscow–Leningrad) see SAIC/X/6, dated May 28, 1945 (NA, RG.332, entry ETO Mis-Y Sect. Box 73).

page 431 On the Bishop Galen affair: Bormann's memorandum of Aug 13, 1941 (3702–PS); Goebbels's diary, Aug 14, 1941, Mar 21, 1942, and May 12, 1943; Table Talk, Jul 4, 1942; Rosenberg memo, May 8, 1942 (1520–PS); Hasselbach manuscript, Sep 26, 1945 (BA, Kl. Erw. 441–3); Bormann, circular of Apr 26, 1943 (T175/68/1860).

page 431 During his Nuremberg war crimes trial Dr. Karl Brandt testified to Hitler's order stopping the euthanasia operation (Case I, transcript page 2443); see too Brandt's interrogation,

Oct 1, 1945. Only a few days earlier, on Aug 21, 1941, the pro-euthanasia film *Ich klage an* (I Accuse) had met an enthusiastic reception at the Führer's HQ (Hewel diary). The Germans argued that once the full weight of Allied saturation bombing fell on the cities, lunatic asylums were nowhere safe from air raids; that the existing hospital space was inadequate for the one million Wehrmacht casualties and that this space was further reduced by the necessity to leave upper floors empty as an air raid precaution.

page 432 Goebbels's brief for his discussion of anti-Jewish measures with the Führer, dated Aug 17, 1941, is on film T81/676/5739 *et seq.*, and see his diary, Aug 13–20 (T84/267). I also used his ministerial conferences of Jul 19, Sep 6 and 17, 1940, and May 27, 1942, and foreign ministry documents on AA serial 4851H, pages 247680-8 and 247716. On the introduction of the Yellow Star emblem, see the Reich Law Gazette (*RGBl.*). I, 1941, page 547, and Heydrich's ordinances in BDC file 240, II, pages 167 *et seq.* ('Everything is to be done to prevent arbitrary and illegal excesses against the Jews now marked in this way. Swift action is to be taken against such transgressions.')

page 437 The only record of Hitler's conversation with Abetz is in Etzdorf's files, AA serial 1247, pages 337765 *et seq.* A summary by the quartermaster general went to the economic staff in France on Sep 24 (IfZ microfilm MA–167); and see Koeppen's report of Sep 18, 1941. Weizsäcker's diary of Sep 15 adds ominously: 'Switzerland will be meted out her punishment in a quite special manner.'

page 438 Late on Sep 3, 1941 – a few hours after Field Marshal von Leeb had already authorised sporadic artillery fire on Leningrad – Keitel assured him that Hitler had no objection to the city's shelling or air bombardment (war diary, Army Group North).

page 439 On the cruel conditions in beleaguered Leningrad, see Himmler's report to Hitler of Oct 23, 1942 (T175/194/3896), and an interrogation report of Sep 22, 1941 (T77/32/0896 *et seq.*). OKW files contain Lossberg's draft recommendations, dated Sep 21, 1941, for fencing off the city 'if possible by electrified wire,' with machine-gun guards; Lossberg admitted there might be epidemics, and it was 'furthermore questionable whether we can trust our soldiers to open fire on women and children breaking out' (T77/792/1456 *et seq.*). After lunch with the Führer on Sep 18, Koeppen noted that the idea was to destroy all Russia's cities as a prerequisite to the lasting German domination of the country.

page 440 The secret AA record of Hitler's remarks to Seyss-Inquart on Sep 26, 1941 was produced as evidence at the later Nuremberg trials (NG–3513).

page 441 My account of Heydrich's posting to Prague is based partly on the notes of Werner Koeppen (T84/387), and on Bormann's diary; the Reich justice ministry files R22/4070 and /4087; interrogations of Neurath, Karl-Hermann Frank, and Kurt Daluege; and Schellenberg's original manuscript, ii, page 243; I also used an AA memo on Hitler's discussion with Neurath, Frank, and Gürtner, dated Oct 5, 1940 (ND, GB–521). The transcript of Heydrich's revealing speech of Oct 2, 1941, is in

Czech state archives.

page 443 On Russian winters, see the German air ministry summary dated Sep 22, 1941 (T77/32/0786 *et seq.*). After it was all over – on Nov 10, 1942 – Milch told his staff that he and Speer had just gone over the Russian meteorological records. 'Last winter [*i.e.*, 1941–42] was by no means abnormal, but by Russian standards a medium winter, as were the two previous winters. . . Last winter was somewhat worse than the notorious winter of 1812 in October, November, and December. *But afterward*, when the French army [of Napoleon] had already been wiped out, in January, February and March [1812], that was just about the coldest there had ever been; but not at the time Napoleon was on his retreat, that was still a medium winter' (MD. 17/3128).

page 443 Weizsäcker (diary, Oct 5): 'The Führer made his speech yesterday. The British can hardly have failed to notice the Führer's silent affection for them, which he still has today; Japan got short shrift indeed.'

page 444 A tactical controversy surrounds the Vyazma–Bryansk encirclement operations. General Hoepner's own comments, dated Oct 4, 1941, are in his papers (N. 51/2).

page 446 The journey reports written by Canaris and Lahousen in October 1941 are in AL/1933; see also Lahousen's interrogations, and the diaries of Halder, Nov 12–14, 1941, and especially of Bock, Oct 20: 'A nightmare picture of tens of thousands of Russian prisoners of war, marching with hardly any guards toward Smolensk. Half dead from exhaustion and starvation, these pitiful souls trudge on.'

page 447 The quotation is from Lahousen's journey report, Oct 23, 1941. In a further report on Oct 28, on his visit to Bock's HQ at Smolensk, Lahousen wrote: 'At the conference with his G-2 [intelligence officer], Tarbuk raised the shooting of Jews at Borissov [Bock's former HQ]. Seven thousand Jews had been liquidated there "in the manner of tinned sardines." The scenes that had resulted were indescribable – often even the SD could not go on, and had to be kept going with heavy consumption of alcohol' (AL/1933). In the report of an armaments inspector in the Ukraine to the OKW's General Thomas, Dec 2, 1941, the active assistance of the Ukrainian militia in the mass killings of the Jews is also emphasised (3257–PS).

page 447 Himmler's letter to Greiser, Sep 18, 1941, is in SS files (T175/54/8695). See also his letter to SS Brigadier Uebelhör, the governor of Lodz, dated Oct 10 in the same file. The governor had protested that he had no room to accommodate the Jews. Himmler rebuked him: 'It is in the Reich's interests that you accommodate the Jews, as it is the Führer's will that the Jews must be driven out from the west to the east, step by step.' In addition to Hitler's adjutants (*e.g.*, Below, Puttkamer, Günsche, Engel, Wolff) whom I interviewed, all the Reichstag stenographers who recorded his conferences, after Sep 1942, denied Hitler's involvement in the Jewish atrocities. Among the private papers of the stenographer Ludwig Krieger I found a note dated Dec 13, 1945. 'In the Führer conferences which I reported in shorthand there was never any mention of

the atrocities against the Jews. For the present it must remain an unanswered question, whether Hitler himself issued specific orders . . . or whether orders issued in generalised terms were executed by subordinates and sadists in this brutal and vile manner.' Both Himmler's adjutant Werner Grothmann and his brother Gebhard Himmler told me the Reichsführer would not have dared to act on his own initiative (see too their interrogations by 21 Army Group in NA, RG.219, Himmler file, XE 000132). Karl Wolff (IfZ, ZS.317) who was Himmler's Chief of Staff, believed that Himmler desired to perform great deeds for the 'Messiah of the next two thousand years' – without having to involve his Führer in them. Writing on Hitler in his Nuremberg prison cell, Ribbentrop also exonerated him wholly. 'How things came to the destruction of the Jews, I just don't know. As to whether Himmler began it, or Hitler put up with it, I don't know. But that he *ordered* it I refuse to believe, because such an act would be wholly incompatible with the picture I always had of him' (Bavarian State Archives, Rep, 502 AXA 131).

page 450 Weizsäcker summarised in his diary on Oct 21, 1941: 'The peace compromise with Britain which we are ready to accept consists of this: the British Empire remains intact (woe, if India fell into other hands or chaos); in Europe of course Britain must stand back. . . Britain – which will shortly be ruled by Beaverbrook – will come to realise that Germany's mission is to organise Europe against the Mongol flood from the east and that Germany and Britain will eventually have to stand side by side against the USA.'

page 451 For Eichmann's conferences up to Oct 1941 on the Madagascar project, see the IfZ collection F–71/8. Himmler's telephone notes are on film T84/95. Greiser's letter of May 1, 1942 was answered by Himmler on Jul 27, 1942, to the effect that he had no objections to liquidating 'with the utmost discretion' the tens of thousands of incurable tuberculosis cases that were also burdening Greiser's economy (NO–244).

page 451 Heydrich's letter to Himmler, Oct 19, 1941, is in SS files (T175/54/8645). Of equal evidentiary interest is Himmler's telephone message to Heydrich on Apr 20, 1942 – after a day with Hitler: 'No annihilation of gypsies.' (See facsimile on page 551). Yet the gypsies were also done to death by the SS.

page 452 See (reproduced on our page 455) the intercept of a message from Bremen to Riga's police chief Dr Lange ('re. *Jews evacuation*') in file HW.16/32: '*Transport train DO 56 has left Bremen 18.11.41 for Minsk with 971 Jews. Escort unit of Bremen regular police; transport commander, Police Sergeant Bockhorn, is in possession of two lists of names and 48,700 Reichsmarks in bank credits. Jews are well provisioned with foodstuffs and appliances*.'

page 456 See too Stahlecker's report of Jan 5, 1942 (ND, NO-3527), which stated that pits for thirty thousand victims had been bulldozed at the forest edge at Rumbuli, five miles outside Riga on the road to Dvinsk. The British codebreakers intercepted Himmler's two Dec 1, 1941 *Funksprüche* to Jeckeln; they too are found in PRO file HW.16/32.

In all of the media fuss surrounding

the 1999 publication of *Der Dienstkalender Heinrich Himmlers 1941/42*, the importance of these two signals was somehow overlooked. There is a useful early account of the Riga episode, not using the CSDIC or intercepts, by Gerald Fleming [Gerhard Flehinger] in *Hitler and the Final Solution* (London, 1984), pages 81–8.

Note that Bruns' interrogation report 6824 DIC (MIS)/CI–24, dated Apr 29, 1945 (NA: RG.332, box 93) describes him as 'a mild-mannered, bureaucratic officer who is anti-Nazi and eager to cooperate with the Allies.'

page 458 The quartermaster general, Eduard Wagner, referred to his meetings with Hitler in private letters; there is more detail in Koeppen's report. On Jan 10, 1942, Wagner admitted to Etzdorf that he had been misled by the General Staff's assessment that the Russian campaign would end in Oct, which would have released rail capacity for the transportation of winter clothing. 'But the winter came a month earlier than usual. . . On Dec 15 the troops had their winter clothing, but it could not cope with temperatures of minus 10 degrees Fahrenheit and worse.' On Jan 25, Keitel gave his OKW staff a similar explanation, and Göring told Mussolini much the same three days later.

page 458 While referring explicitly to my conclusions, the *New York Times* asserted on Jan 21, 1998: 'Despite a half-century of research, no single document has provided evidence that the Nazi leader gave a written order for the Holocaust.' Christian Gerlach, 36, writing in *Werkstatt Geschichte*, Jan 1998, argues that the Himmler diary entry of Dec 12, 1941 puts the decision later and directly into Hitler's hands.

page 457 On the importance of Hitler's meeting with the gauleiters on Dec 12, 1941, Prof. Richard Breitman concludes with Hans Mommsen and other professors that 'the jury is still out,' while Prof. Michael H. Kater, Distinguished Research Professor of History at Toronto's York University, fumed in January 1998 on the Internet, '– So it looks as if David Irving can still not shell out his money' – an allusion to our offer of a reward for any wartime document showing that Hitler was aware of, or ordered, the Holocaust.

page 458 There is information on Hitler's inspection of Wagner's winter equipment display on Nov 1, 1941, in Bormann's diary, Wagner's letters, and the testimony of Heinz von Gyldenfeldt, Baron Ulrich von Canstein, and Puttkamer.

page 459 Raeder's anxiety about the Mediterranean is mirrored in the naval staff war diary and in the diaries of Waldau and Weizsäcker. See also Göring's conference with the Italians on Oct 2 (MD.65/7111 *et seq*.)., Hitler's directives of Oct 29 and Dec 2, Jodl's note of Oct 22 (Annexe XIV to naval staff war diary Part C) and Commander Wolf Junge's letter to the naval staff of Nov 3 (PG/33213), and above all Hitler's letter to Mussolini of Oct 16 and his conference with Admiral Fricke on Oct 27, 1941 (PG/31762e).

page 461 Hoepner's critique dated Oct 16, 1941, is in his papers (N.51/2).

page 462 In a telephone conversation with General Greiffenberg, Chief of Staff of Army Group Centre, Halder expressed the following beliefs: 'The

Russians will try and hang on to the Moscow area as long as possible. This area – which is excellently linked with the Asiatic power sources – can be regarded as the bridgehead of Asiatic Russia in Europe. . . . In contrast to this, the possession of the Caucasus is not strategically necessary for the Russians and they can replace the oil fields they'll lose there by other adequate sources in the Urals and Asia. Their defence of Caucasus serves more of a negative purpose – to keep Germany out of the energy sources we so desperately need' (war diary of Army Group Centre).

page 463 Todt's private meeting with Hitler on Nov 29, 1941 was also attended by tank specialist Dr. Walter Rohland, who made available to me parts of his pocket diary and unpublished memoirs.

page 463 Notes on Hitler's tank-design symposia in February, May, and November 1941 are – with related correspondence – in the OKW war diary, i, and microfilm T77/17; I also used Todt's notebooks and the post-war testimony of Saur, his deputy (FD.3049/49).

page 464 Ribbentrop's full speech is in BA file R.43 II/606. Under interrogation (Aug 29, 1945) he stated that Hitler gave him express permission to make this reply to the – shrewd – British propaganda motif that Ribbentrop had misinformed the Führer.

page 464 Hewel later showed Hitler the AA's intercept of Ciano's cypher telegram reporting their interview. According to Koeppen's note, Ciano and his entourage ate with Hitler and Ribbentrop alone. 'The individual members of the Führer's HQ made virtually no attempt to conceal their dislike of him [Ciano].'

page 464 On Oct 21, 1941, Marshal Pétain had written to Hitler reminding him of his offer at Montoire, adding: 'The victory of your arms over Bolshevism now gives even greater cause than there was one year ago to cooperate on peaceful works for the greatness of a changed Europe' (T77/851/5971).

page 465 On the employment of Russian prisoners in German industry, see Göring's conference of Nov 7, 1941 (1193–PS), and Speer's unpublished office chronicle, Nov 21 and 29. Despite opposition from the army, the food minister, Darré, and the Party, who feared Bolshevik contamination of Germany, Hitler insisted on the immediate employment and proper nutrition of the Russian prisoners; Sauckel supported him, as did Backe. On Mar 22, 1942 Speer recorded the Führer's order: 'The Russians are to receive absolutely adequate nutrition and Sauckel is to ensure that the food is provided by Backe.' Moreover: 'The Führer is surprised that the Russian civilians are still being treated like prisoners of war behind barbed wire. I [Speer] explain that this results from an order he issued. The Führer is aware of *no* such order.' Hitler's attitude is confirmed by Frau Backe's private diary on Apr 11. Backe assured Sauckel the Russians would get normal rations. 'At the next conference Sauckel thanked Herbert for his help. Herbert's opinion tallies exactly with the Führer's, he said. Then he [Sauckel] announced that he wants to import five hundred thousand foreign girls as home helps! Herbert was shocked at this and wouldn't quiet down all day because of it – how can such a thing be planned as

though the Führer seriously desires it?'

page 466 Oshima's Japanese telegram to Tokyo was intercepted by American cryptanalysts (ND, D-656). The German record describes Ribbentrop's remarks to Oshima even more clearly: 'He didn't believe that Japan would avoid the conflict with America, and the situation could hardly be more favourable to the Japanese than now. He (Ribbentrop) thought they should exploit it now, while they were so strong' (T120/606/0025 *et seq.*).

page 467 Autopsy reports indicating that Waffen SS troops killed in battle had been partially eaten by the Russians will be found in the files of SS division Nord (T175/120/5322 *et seq.*). On several occasions Hitler referred in private to Russian cannibalism – *e.g.*, to the new Croat envoy Budak on Feb 14, 1942 ('hundreds of bones and bits of human body' were found after a long siege of a Russian unit was ended); in Table Talk, Apr 5; to Goebbels (diary of Apr 21 and 26), and to Mussert (remarking on the 'large stocks of human flesh' found on Russian prisoners of war) on Dec 10, 1942 (BA file NS.19/*neu* 1556).

page 468 Timoshenko's secret speech was reported by the German military attaché in Berne (First Panzer Army, war diary, annexe, N.63/53). Göring mentioned this speech to Mussolini on Jan 28, and Hitler to Antonescu on Feb 11, 1942.

page 468 My version of events at Rundstedt's HQ is based on the diaries of Halder, Richthofen, Waldau, and Bock; the war diaries of Army Group South and the First Panzer Army; and an OKW note of Dec 3, 1941, as well as on post-war interrogations.

page 469 The crisis in the Battle of Moscow: I used the diaries of Bock, Waldau, Richthofen, Halder, and Hewel; the war diaries of Army Group Centre and the Second Panzer Army; interrogations of Guderian, Heusinger, Brauchitsch; Günter Blumentritt's study of the Fourth Army's role in *WR*, 1954, pages 105 *et seq.*; and especially Klaus Reinhard, *Die Wende vor Moskau* (Stuttgart, 1972). Guderian's son also supplied me with copies of the letters written by his father, and diary extracts of General Liebenstein, his father's Chief of Staff, and of Lieutenant Joachim von Lehsten, Guderian's aide-de-camp.

page 470 The Soviet counter-offensives opening on Dec 5–6, 1941, clearly accelerated Brauchitsch's decision to resign. On the 4th his chief staff officer, Colonel Gyldenfeldt, wrote in his diary: 'With utter candour he has admitted that he just can't go on any longer, particularly since he feels completely incapable of holding his own in discussions with the Führer. Therefore he intends to take the necessary measures to wind up the eastern campaign, which must be regarded as not won, and to take responsibility for this: then he'll ask the Führer to relieve him of his post.'

page 470 Dietrich's description of bringing in word of Pearl Harbor is in RG.332, interrogation FIR.28.

page 473 Commander Wolf Junge and General Ivo-Thilo von Throtha both referred in their unpublished memoirs to front-line rumours of Hitler's presence. The long quotation is from Hitler's remarks to Speer and Milch on May 24, 1942 (in Milch's papers).

page 474 There is an OKW record of Hitler's midnight conference with

Fromm (T77/792/1485): I also used the diary of Fromm's Chief of Staff, General Karl-Erik Koehler, and Halder's diary.

page 477 On Dec 16, 1941 Richthofen wrote in his diary: 'Führer seems to have made up his mind on major reshuffle: Brauchitsch, Halder, Keitel, and Bock are out – at last.' But on Jan 18, 1942, Richthofen wrote: 'According to Jeschonnek, Keitel and Halder are "unfortunately" staying on for the time being.'

page 477 Halder's satisfaction with Hitler as the new Commander in Chief was evident for many months. On Mar 25, 1942, Greiner, the OKW war diarist, quoted Warlimont thus in a private diary: '[Hitler's] "marriage" to Halder is good, Halder has developed a freer hand since Brauchitsch's departure; Jodl has adopted the roll of "joint adviser" at the daily war conferences.' General Wagner, who accompanied Halder daily to the Führer's HQ, wrote on Jan 21, 1942: 'I don't get away from my desk or telephone before 2:30 A.M. each day, and three hours are taken up each midday by the war conference and journeys to and from the Führer. . . The Führer looks well, and working directly with him is a pleasure.'

page 478 Hitler's 'scorched earth' policy can be traced back to Dec 8, 1941, when Keitel telephoned to Army Group North the Führer's instruction that every kind of accommodation was to be ruthlessly destroyed before regions were evacuated: 'In the interests of the military operations there is to be no respect whatever for the population's plight.' Hitler's remarks on Dec 20 were communicated by telegram to the three army groups the next day (NOKW–539); and see the OKW signal to the OKH (T77/792/1489), Halder's diary, and Manstein's order to the Eleventh Army, Dec 23, 1941 (NOKW–1726).

page 479 Hitler's telephone conversations with Kluge are reported in Army Group Centre's war diary; I also used the diaries of Hewel and Bormann, and post-war testimony of the adjutants Puttkamer and Below.

page 480 The Luftwaffe General von Richthofen, whose reports had caused Förster's downfall, was himself given command of his Sixth Army Corps – a command of which he hurriedly divested himself.

page 481 For Hoepner's dismissal from the army 'with all legal consequences' see Halder's diary, Keitel's memoirs, and the unpublished memoirs of Weichs. In Hoepner's papers (N.51/7) is a 1944 memo by a Major Frankenberg: Schmundt had told him how he had reproached the Führer – 'You've sacked one of our most capable army commanders' – to which a remorseful Hitler replied, 'I had to make an example of him. Have him told that the family will be taken care of.' But on Jan 13, 1942, Hoepner sent to Schmundt a *pièce justificative* (N.51/3), listing his many vain attempts to contact Halder before issuing the order to retreat; Hoepner demanded a court-martial. After the 1944 bomb plot Hitler lost sympathy for him (War Conference, Aug 31, 1944) and allowed his execution. A thoughtful analysis of the legal aspects of the Hoepner, Sponeck, and related cases was published by Dr. Günter Gribbohm in the judges' journal, *Deutsche Richterzeitung*, May 1972 and Feb 1973.

page 481 In narrating the withdrawal of the German battleships from Brest, I used Puttkamer's memoirs and his letters to Raeder on Dec 26, 1941 (PG/31780), and Jan 4, 1942 (PG/31762e), Junge's memoirs, the naval staff war diary, the diary of Luftwaffe General Karl Koller, and Captain Wolfgang Köhler's article in *WR*, 1952, pages 171 *et seq*.

page 482 In a private letter on Apr 12, 1942, Greiner described the casualties on the Russian front up to Mar 20 as tolerable: 6·63 percent fatalities, 1·5 percent missing, 23·43 percent injured. 'Frost casualties number 133,000, including 17,500 third-degree cases [amputees].' By Mar 31 the latter figure had risen to 18,337 (Goebbels diary, Apr 17, 1942).

page 482 The original letter of Feb 10, 1942 is on microfilm, t175/125/9983 *et seq*.

page 483 On Jun 5, 1942, Hitler explained: 'Fanatical loyalty toward your allies – that's the secret behind keeping them in line' (war diary, OKW historical division).

page 483 Todt himself stressed that the plan to simplify arms production 'resulted from one of the Führer's own ideas' (naval staff war diary, Jan 22, 1942). My narrative here is based on Saur's files (FD.1434/46 and 3049/49), Milch's files (MD.51/435 *et seq*.)., and the microfilms T77/194, /313, /441, and /545; on Goebbels's and Bormann's diaries, Feb 6–7, 1942, and Speer's *Chronik*.

page 484 Hitler's order for a 'black box' type cockpit-recorder to be designed is referred to in Milch's conferences on Feb 28 (MD.341954), Apr 14, and Oct 16, 1942 (MD.13/130 and 34/2300).

page 484 Weizsäcker mirrored Hitler's uneasiness at events in the Far East. 'We express great joy at the fall of Singapore. And yet our feelings are mixed. European yearning for great achievements with the British awakes in us' (diary, Feb 13, 1942).

page 484 The Japanese navy actively urged Germany to make peace with Russia. But Ribbentrop cabled Tokyo on Mar 7: 'It is of course out of the question for Germany ever to take the initiative in seeking a rapprochement with the Soviet Union.'

page 485 Railroad officials' arrests: see Engel's letter to Himmler, Mar 8, 1942 (T175/124/9458).

page 486 Hitler spoke of Stalin's shortage of coking coal to the diplomats Alfieri and Draganoff on Aug 4 and 14, 1942, respectively; in fact – as Manstein wrote in *Verlorene Siege*, page 429 – there were further great coal reserves in the Kusnetsk region, as her continued war production showed.

page 486 That Hitler had convinced Halder on the Caucasus campaign is evident from a report by the naval liaison officer to the General Staff, in the naval staff war diary on Apr 8, 1942. 'The region has in his [Halder's] view the same significance as the province of Silesia has to Prussia. . . But it will no longer be possible this year to operate *across* the Caucasus mountains,' *i.e.*, to aid Rommel's simultaneous offensive towards the Suez Canal.

page 487 Greiner's diary shows that the Saint-Nazaire raid occurred at a time when Hitler was disenchanted with the navy. On Mar 1942, he noted:

'Navy should write fewer memoranda.' And on Mar 28: '2:15 A.M., British raid at Saint-Nazaire, which while completely beaten off has enjoyed an element of success, resulting in intensified hostility of Führer to navy.'

page 487 German interrogation results on the British prisoners will be found in Paul Schmidt's AA files, serial 1993, and in Etzdorf's file, serial 364, and Weizsäcker's file serial 98, page 109234. See also the diaries of the naval staff, Apr 12, and of Goebbels, Apr 15, 1942. Hitler drew his own conclusions, as Greiner noted on Apr 7: 'Führer thinks a different end to war with Britain can't be ruled out. British prisoners' hatred of USA.'

page 489 See Scheel's report on a talk between Lammers and Meissner after the final Reichstag session of Apr 26 (T175/139/7479 *et seq*.).

page 489 According to Karl Ritter's AA file on the German–Turkish arms negotiations (serial 1089) Hitler offered 150 million Reichsmarks' worth of U-boats, 50-millimetre antitank guns, 20-millimetre and heavy anti-aircraft, machine guns, ammunition, and the equipment for a light tank brigade. See also Lothar Krecker, *Deutschland und die Türkei im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt, 1964).

page 489 Colonel Schmundt took a detailed note of the military part of Mussolini's conference with Hitler on Apr 30, 1942 (naval staff war diary, annexes, Part C, xiv). See also the full note in Mussolini's handwriting (T586/405/545 *et seq*.). Ugo Cavallero, *Diario* (Rome, 1948), and Admiral Eberhard Weichold's study in *WR*, 1959, page 164 *et seq*.

page 490 Himmler submitted to Hitler the ministry of post's report on the success of its *Forschungsanstalt* (Research Division) in unscrambling the transatlantic radiotelephone used by the enemy on Mar 6, 1942 (T175/129/4865 *et seq*.). He enclosed a sample conversation of Sep 7, 1941. See also *ibid*., pages 9924 *et seq*., and the memo of May 1, 1942, which suggests that these top-secret intercepts were fed straight to the document shredder after Hitler read them (T175/122/7620). On May 21, 1942 Berger wrote to Himmler's staff that Ohnesorge wanted only Himmler and Hitler to see the intercepts, not Heydrich, and that a teleprinter link would be established directly between the listening post in Holland and the Führer's headquarters (T175/139/7377). For intercept materials, see AA serial 1171, pages 328367–329087).

page 490 There are traces of the intercepted US signals between Washington and Cairo in Hewel's Ledger (*e.g.*, on Feb 21, 1942), in the naval staff war diary of Apr 30, and in Table Talk, Jun 28, 1942, evening.

page 492 After the unprecedented German victory at Kharkov, everybody claimed paternity of the crucial decision to go ahead with 'Fridericus' as planned. Thus Halder – who had written in his diary only that Bock's proposal to abandon 'Fridericus' in favour of a frontal defence was 'turned down' – expanded this with a post-war footnote that this was on his advice. Bock's diary however shows beyond a shadow of doubt that Halder had fought tooth and nail against the decision. As Keitel – writing in a prison cell, from memory – correctly wrote (memoirs,

page 302): 'Hitler interceded and quite simply ordered the operation ['Fridericus'] to be fought his way.'

See also the war diary of the OKW historical division, May 14–19; Goebbels's diary, May 22 and 31 (unpublished); and Table Talk, Jun 2, 1942, evening. Hans Doerr, at the time Chief of Staff of Fifty-second Corps, analysed the battle in *WR*, 1954, pages 9 *et seq*.

page 493 Waldau noted sceptically on Jan 2, 1942 (diary): 'Reports from Japanese sources that the Russians have now exhausted their strategic reserves are willingly believed.' Halder demonstrated such willingness in his diary on Jan 4 and Feb 13. On Mar 1, Bock warned that the Russians might well have sufficient in reserve to raise complete new armies in the hinterland. Halder telephoned him on Mar 5 that he had disputed Bock's fears to the Führer: no Intelligence – even from abroad – indicated the raising of new armies. On Mar 7, after hearing his eastern expert's views, Halder noted: 'In short: they are gradually being worn down.' But on Mar 20 the same expert, Colonel Kinzel, revised his views; he now believed the Russians could raise fifty to sixty new divisions! Halder's complacency however continued. On Apr 2 Hitler suggested that the Russians could scarcely raise new armies because of industrial problems; on Apr 19 Halder responded that the Russians had already used up most of their available strength (war diary, OKW historical division). The same source shows that even on Jun 25 Halder interpreted Intelligence reports that Stalin was moving reinforcements into Sebastopol by submarine as 'a fresh proof that the enemy lacks reserves.'

page 494 The BDC holds an important dossier on the assassination of Heydrich (now transferred to BA); and the Yivo institute has the final report on the investigation and capture of the assassins (Occ E 7(a)–5). Himmler told his doctor, Karl Gebhardt, that Hitler was furious about Heydrich's death, it was 'a greater loss than the greatest battle lost in the East'; Morell had blamed Gebhardt for not using his Ultraseptyl (sulphonamide) drug on Heydrich. Gebhardt deposition, Dec 7, 1946, in Nuremberg.

page 494 The letter from the Gestapo to the Oberfinanzpräsident of Berlin, Jun 5, 1942, is quoted by Gerald Reitlinger in *Die Endlösung. Hitlers Versuch der Ausrottung der Juden Europas, 1939–1945* (Berlin, 1956), page 111. For further details see our *Goebbels. Mastermind of the Third Reich*, page 395 and notes.

page 494 Hitler realistically commented on the 'thousand-bomber' raid on Cologne: 'Given the mendacity of British propaganda it's possible they're exaggerating by a factor of two or three; but the British couldn't exaggerate by a factor of *ten* and look their own troops in the face' (war diary, OKW historical division, Jun 3, 1942); see also his remarks to Goebbels (diary, Mar 9, 1943) and war conference, Jan 28, 1944 (Heiber, pages 544 *et seq*.).

page 495 The AA file on the Final Solution of the Jewish Problem (serial 1513) contains the original RSHA memorandum on the so-called Wannsee Conference of Jan 20, 1942; this may be the 'detailed memorandum' summarised in Goebbels's diary of Mar 7, 1942. Nowhere in the entire Goebbels

diaries – *including* the entries from those years only recently published– is there any reference to Hitler's alleged initiative in the extermination of the Jews. See also Luther's memo of Aug 21 (*ibid.*, and NG–2586). Further sources on the Wannsee Conference are documents 709–PS and NG–5770: the testimony of Dr. Lammers (IMT, xi, page 61) and in Case XI (Sep 23, 1948); and a memo by the East Ministry, Jan 20, 1942 (AA serial 7117H). On Feb 10, 1942, an AA official noted that since 'Barbarossa' had yielded other territories suitable for a solution of the Jewish problem, 'the Führer has accordingly decided that the Jews are to be deported not to Madagascar but to the east' (ND, NG–5770: AA file, Under-Secretary, 'Colonies,' serial 2554).

page 496 For Heydrich's Mar 6, 1942, conference see Franz Rademacher's note (serial 1513, pages 372020 *et seq.*). and the record of Mar 14 (serial 1512, pages 371961 *et seq.*).

page 497 Globocnik was quoted by SS Brigadier Viktor Brack in a letter to Himmler on Jun 26, 1942 (NO–206). Brack also proposed that the two to three million able-bodied Jews among Europe's ten million Jews should be sorted out and sterilised.

page 498 The only evidence of a 'Führer Order' comes from post-war testimony of SS Major Dieter Wisliceny, Eichmann's adviser attached to the Slovak government (*e.g.*, in pre-trial interrogations at Nuremberg and a manuscript dated Bratislava, Nov 18, 1946). He claimed the Slovaks had sent him to Berlin in July or August 1942 to check up on the fate of 33,000 next of kin of the 17,000 able-bodied Jews supplied for the German arms industry; Eichmann, he said, had admitted that the 33,000 had been liquidated, and pulled from his safe a red-bordered Immediate Letter, stamped 'Top State Secret,' with Himmler's signature and addressed to Heydrich and Pohl. It read (from Eichmann's memory): 'The Führer has decided that the Final Solution of the Jewish Question is to begin at once. I herewith designate [Heydrich and Pohl] responsible for the execution of this order.'

Eichmann, examined about Wisliceny's claims at his trial in Jerusalem on Apr 10, 1961, testified that he had neither received any such written order nor shown one to Wisliceny (who had long since been executed himself). He had only told Wisliceny verbally, 'Heydrich sent for me and informed me that the Führer has ordered the physical annihilation of the Jews.' In his 1955–1956 dictated notes, since 1991 in my possession, Eichmann spoke of remembering how Heydrich once told him, 'I come from the Reichsführer. He has ordered the liquidation of the Jews.' There is no primary or secondary documentary support for such a statement. This kind of evidence, of course, would not suffice in an English magistrate's court to convict a vagabond of bicycle stealing. Heydrich was *hors de combat* by the end of May 1942, but on Jul 24, 1942 Hitler was still referring to a Madagascar Plan (Dr. Henry Picker: *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier 1941–1942*, Stuttgart, 1963).

page 500 On the 'resettlement' of the Jews from Poland, see Himmler's letter of Jul 19, 1942, to SS General Friedrich Krüger, the SS and police chief at

Cracow (T175/122/7914); Wolff was tried in 1964 by a Munich court and sentenced to fifteen years in prison. In the Wolff trial, SS General von dem Bach-Zelewski testified that in his view 'Hitler knew nothing of the mass destruction of the Jews' and that 'the entire thing began with Himmler.' The Wolff–Ganzenmüller letters are in Himmler's files (T175/54/8626 *et seq*.).

page 500 The British knowledge of Auschwitz derived from intercepts of the code messages transmitted by its commandant, Rudolf Höss, to Berlin: in this case, GC&CS German police section report No. 40/42, dated Sep 26 (PRO files HW.16/6, part ii, and HW1/929).

page 500 We discovered the text of Goebbels's secret speech of Sep 23, 1942 and related documents in PRO files FO.371/30928 and /34454, and sent copies to Canadian friends. Shortly Mr Sol Littman of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre in Toronto announced his discovery of the item to the world. See David Irving, *Goebbels. Mastermind of the Third Reich*, pages 402 and 652.

page 502 Bormann wrote to Goebbels on Jun 8, 1942 that the Führer had forbidden his gauleiters to make any public statements whatever on the Czech problem (T175/139/7362).

page 505 Halder referred on Jun 25, 1942, to 'fresh proof that the enemy lacks reserves' (war diary, OKW historical division); and on Jul 6 Halder noted in his diary that while the Führer expected Timoshenko to adopt an 'elastic' defence, Halder adhered to his view that the Red Army had been over-estimated and completely destroyed by operation 'Blue.' I am aware of Colonel Gehlen's regular Intelligence reports to Halder, which spoke a very different language; but there is no indication that Halder forwarded these unpalatable warnings to Hitler. On Jun 28, 1942, Gehlen assessed Stalin's current strength at 375 rifle divisions, 26 cavalry divisions, and 68 tank divisions and brigades; he did not believe that 'Blue' would dispose of all 160 divisions confronting Army Group South (Bock). Even if one hundred were destroyed, the Russians would still have some 350 rifle divisions, taking those to be raised in the coming winter into account, plus corresponding numbers of cavalry and tank divisions by early 1943. This was hardly the 'military collapse' Halder prophesied. In retrospect Field Marshal von Bock wrote on Mar 1, 1943 (diary): 'From all the various accounts it is pretty plain to me that – just as in the winter of 1941 – the collapse of the Russians was expected by us at top level, we split up our forces having over-estimated our success, and we ended up too weak everywhere.'

page 505 On the Voronezh controversy, and Hitler's flight to Poltava, I used the diaries of Bock, Halder, and the commandant of the Führer's HQ. Bock's diary, incidentally, establishes that in Halder's view Voronezh should be fully captured first – a view he amended on Jul 5 when he realised the damage that the delay was inflicting on the main thrust south. By the time Halder published his diaries he characteristically claimed in a footnote that he had *recommended* that Hitler leave Voronezh alone! Not so.

page 505 On the reasons for Bock's dismissal, see his diary entries for Oct

10, Dec 4 and 9, 1942, and Jan 3, Mar 22 and 26, 1943; also the unpublished memoirs of Weichs, commanding the Second Army (N.19/10); the naval staff diary, Jul 17, 1942, and Hitler's remarks at the war conference on Dec 12, 1942 (Heiber, page 84).

page 506 The invasion force assembling in southern England is reported by the Commander in Chief, West in the OKW historical division's war diary, Jun 23; in Hanns Rauter's letter to Himmler, Jun 25 (T175/122/7940); in the naval staff war diary, annexes C, x (PG/32201), and the war diary of the Admiral Commanding France, Jun 26, 1942.

page 506 Hitler's policies for colonising Russia are outlined in Himmler's letters to Gauleiter Alfred Frauenfeld, Jul 10, 1942 (NO–2417) and to Schellenberg, Jul 17 (T175/55/9345); in Canaris's diary, Aug 10 (AL/1933); in Bormann's letter to Rosenberg, Jul 23 (T175/194/4061 *et seq*.).; and in a memo on a Rovno conference Aug 26–28, 1942, in Etzdorf's AA file, serial 1247.

page 507 Himmler quoted Hitler's remarks on education in a secret speech on Sep 16, 1942 (T175/103/4970 *et seq*.). Two days previously he had a telephone conversation with Bormann about 'illegitimate children in Russia.' On the food problem, see Göring's conference with the gauleiters on Aug 6 (ND, USSR–170); Etzdorf's memo of Aug 7; Göring's personal assistant's notes for Führer conferences dated Jul 24, 27 and 29, and Aug 11 (T84/8); and Hassell's diary, Sep 4, 1942.

page 508 In Richthofen's diary, Jul 19, 1942, is entered the first impatient criticism: 'The armies aren't going to attack Nikolevskaya for two more days – by which time the Russians will have bolted!' Richthofen was particularly unsympathetic to the 'ageing and doubtless weary' General Hoth.

page 508 Weichs wrote in his manuscript memoirs, 'I felt obliged to telephone Hitler myself to demand aid for my army, and fast. But I ran into unexpected difficulties: Hitler obviously couldn't use the telephone correctly. Normally his speech was fast and fluent, but on the phone he stuttered, or paused so long that it was by no means certain he was still there. Moreover his stuttering was very hard to understand on the phone. Even my Intelligence officer, who had been listening in, couldn't tell me afterward what Hitler's actual answers had been. So that was the first and last telephone conversation I ever had with Hitler.'

page 508 Halder's revealing telephone conversation with List on Jul 30 is in the war diary of Army Group A. His signal to Army Groups A and B next day transferring the Fourth Panzer Army to the Stalingrad front is in the OKW war diary. In a 1964 footnote to his own diaries Halder disowns the signal, and suggests it was sent 'on Hitler's instructions'; but the diary clearly reveals – as of course does Halder's conversation with List – that he shared Hitler's appreciation of the situation.

page 509 Samples of the intercepted Churchill telephone conversations shown to Hitler are on film T175/122/7449 *et seq*.); that of Jul 22 was recorded on 'Reel 599,' one on Jul 13 is on 'Reel 553' and one on Jul 14 is on 'Reel 562.' Pencilled notes indicate that Wolff

showed them to the Führer.

page 509 The same Abwehr agent who reported the Dieppe raid also correctly warned of the Nov 1942 invasion and of a heavy air raid due on Berlin (naval staff war diary, Oct 31, 1942, and Mar 15, 1943).

page 509 For Hitler's conferences of Aug 2 and 13, 1942, see General Jacob's record on film T78/317, PG/32201, and the naval staff war diary, Aug 6, 11, 13, 17, and 21. Halder's diary, Aug 15, shows the spirit in which the OKH embarked on the new fortifications. 'General Jacob: Führer's new demands for permanent improvement of western coastal fortifications (impossible demands!)'

page 510 In describing the Dieppe debacle I have used the war diaries of the Ninth Air Corps, the naval staff, and its special file, 'Enemy Landing at Dieppe' (annexes, Part C, iib); the diary of Koller (Third Air Force), and Junge's memoirs. On Aug 20, 1942, Admiral Krancke was able to report to Raeder from Werewolf: 'The enemy landing at Dieppe has been contemplated with extreme calmness at Führer HQ.'

page 510 Paul Schmidt's report on the interrogations is in serial 67, pages 47914 *et seq*.

page 510 The quotation is from Hitler's secret speech to commanders on Sep 29, 1942 (a record taken by the First Army, in its war diary, annexes, T312/23/9706 *et seq*.).

page 511 On the supply and logistics problems see Richthofen's blistering speech at Rostov, Aug 15, and especially his annexe to his diary, Aug 23, 1942.

page 511 Small wonder that on Feb 11, 1943, Hitler blamed the Stalingrad disaster – as well as on his weak allies – on the fact that the OKH 'had either not carried out a series of his orders at all, or had done so badly' (Richthofen diary).

page 512 Richthofen's opinion was at variance with the General Staff's. On Aug 12, he wrote in his diary: 'The Russian southern army is destroyed. Parts of it are in rout along the Georgian Army Road' – beyond the Caucasus mountains!

page 513 I base my account of 'Operation Whirlwind' on Greiner's original draft OKW war diary (of which I have deposited a complete *correct* transcript with the IfZ) and on Halder's diary. In his post-war diary, Mar 27, 1946, General von Salmuth (Fourth Army) suggested that 'Whirlwind' was one instance of Hitler's military inability. 'It had been worked out as a double pincer from north and south. The Russian offensive at Rzhev burst right in the middle, which meant the loss of the pincer's main arm. Kluge asked the Führer more than once to call off what would now be a one-armed "Whirlwind". . . Adolf Hitler just retorted – when Kluge reproached him that he would be sacrificing thirty or forty thousand men for nothing – "Just watch, the offensive will cut through them like butter!"'

page 513 The quotation is from Hitler's war conference on Dec 12, 1942 (Heiber, page 92). Greiner's original draft proves that on Aug 12, 1942 – *i.e.*, right at the start of 'Whirlwind' – Hitler had told Halder, 'The forces are to be held tightly together in the main direction of attack, Sukhinichi.'

page 514 Several versions of Hitler's famous row with Halder on Aug 24,

1942, exist: Heusinger's, Manstein's, and Warlimont's memoirs. I used especially Halder's conversation with General Heim on Aug 13, 1945 (recorded by hidden microphones at CSDIC).

page 515 I have reconstructed Rommel's supply problems in the desert from his diary and private letters (T84/R274); from the diary of General von Waldau, director of air operations (Africa), with its many appendices; from Greiner's draft war diary; from the daily reports of Rommel's Panzer Army Africa; from the naval staff war diary and from Ritter's AA file on Egypt, serial 1442.

page 516 Hitlers plan to 'dispose of' Stalingrad's population is referred to in Halder's diary, Aug 31, and Greiner's draft of Sep 2, 1942. Halder was presumably Weizsäcker's source in writing (diary, Sep 13) 'So our plan is to destroy Bolshevism *and* the Russian empire. To this end Stalingrad and Leningrad are to be destroyed.'

page 516 For Richthofen's hostility to Hoth, see his diary, Jul 22–23, and Aug 23–25 and 27, 1942; and Greiner's and Halder's diaries, Aug 28, 1942.

page 516 List's visit to Hitler is recounted in the diaries of Richthofen, Greiner, Halder, and Army Group A, Aug 31; and the naval staff, Sep 1–2, 1942.

page 517 I base my account on Jodl's own papers. Milch wrote in his diary on Sep 7, 1942: 'Vinnitsa, to see Führer. Noon, conference on Central Planning and aviation. Row about List?' Saur told me in 1965: 'It was the worst depression I have ever experienced at the HQ, because Jodl's report was such a shock – up to then nobody had wanted to believe it, and the Führer wouldn't have found out for a long time either if Jodl, who was an extraordinarily honest man, hadn't told him.'

page 517 Julius Schaub's papers contain a full account of the recruiting of the conference stenographers. I also used Bormann's diary, Sep 7, 1942; Heiber's introduction to the war conferences, pages 14 *et seq.*; and the correspondence between Lammers and Göring's staff in September and October (T84/8). Before committing suicide in May 1945 Hitler's court historian General Scherff ordered the stenograms of the war conferences destroyed. Fortunately his adjutant Wilhelm Scheidt (see note to page 223) took notes on which he based a useful series of articles in *Echo der Woche*, Sep – Nov 1949, and his widow turned his papers over to me. I also suspect that a set of the stenograms will eventually be found in former Soviet archives.

page 518 Stenographer Karl Thöt, who served Hitler from Sep 11, 1942, to the very end, wrote a diary which is in my collection at the IfZ. Hitler went to great lengths to win the stenographers' respect; on Dec 25, 1942 the diary records how the Führer received the two duty stenographers a few minutes early and explained, 'In earlier times I often used stenographers. In 1931 or 1932 I was called to testify in a trial against Dr. Goebbels in Berlin. The lawyer – a half-Jew – fired one question after another at me from 9 A.M. to 7 P.M. trying to trap me; and I was well aware that the press was just waiting to use my testimony to accuse me of just about anything, to get a stranglehold on me. I hired two stenographers from the

Bavarian parliament, and these gentlemen really saved my bacon. Anyway, I'm glad to have you here now and only regret I didn't fetch you in earlier, as I want to pin down the responsibility for events once and for all by a shorthand record. As you see, I have to deal with even the smallest trivia myself here. Moreover these things must be taken down for later historical research.'

page 518 J. Daniel Chamier's biography, *Ein Fabeltier unserer Zeit: Glanz und Tragödie KaiserWilhelm II*, was proscribed reading in the Third Reich, according to the records of the Nazi Party censorship commission (NS. 11/22).

page 518 On Sep 16, 1942, Rommel wrote after a talk with Kesselring; 'He came from the Führer's HQ. The battle for Stalingrad seems to be very hard and it's tying down a lot of strength we could use better in the south. Field Marshal L[ist] is to be retired. . . It didn't work out with H[alder] either in the long run, as I predicted' (T84/R274/0890). Meanwhile Rundstedt wrote: 'I'm very sad about losing Zeitzler. Schmundt came specially in "Top Dog's' name to tell me why it had to be.' (Letter of Sep 20: see note to page 419). Zeitzler's name was *not* mentioned as early as Sep 9 – the last four paragraphs of Greiner's published war diary (OKW war diary, ii, pages 704 *et seq.*). are a post-war fabrication. On Sep 27 Greiner privately summarised: 'The last three weeks haven't been pleasant – a major crisis of confidence caused by the unsatisfactory situation on the eastern front. The first victim was Halder, but he really wasn't up to much any more, as he was a nervous wreck. His successor is now the diminutive, stocky, ambitious, bustling, and definitely highly energetic Zeitzler.' The rest of my narrative is based on Zeitzler's papers (N.63/1 and /18) and the diaries of Frau Schmundt, Bormann, and Halder.

page 520 The order is in the war diary of the chief of army personnel (*i.e.*, Schmundt), Oct 5, 1942 (T78/39). Schmundt replaced Wilhelm Keitel's ailing brother Bodewin.

page 521 King Christian's telegram read simply: 'To Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler. Best thanks for your congratulations. Christian *Rex*.' I also referred to the diaries of Goebbels, Hassell, Weizsäcker, and the naval staff, and an interrogation of Baron von Steengracht. For Best's appointment see his manuscripts, written in 1949 (IfZ, ZS.207) and his contemporary report on his first six months, in Himmler's files (T175/119/4942 *et seq.*).

page 521 A General Staff transcript of the speech is on microfilm t78/317.

page 523 Rommel's notes for his meeting with Hitler will be found in *Panzerarmee* Africa files (T313/467/5064); and see his letter to Stumme, Oct 5 (T84/273).

page 524 On Oct 26 Admiral Krancke reported to the naval staff the 'perceptible relaxation' of tension at the Führer HQ since Zeitzler had replaced Halder. Goebbels also commented in his diary, Dec 20 – Zeitzler was doing his utmost, which would, Goebbels hoped, leave the Führer with more time to attend to the neglected affairs of state.

page 525 For my investigation of the origins of Hitler's Commando Order, I used Hitler's letter to the Wehrmacht commands, Oct 18, 1942 (503–PS), and interrogations of Keitel and Jodl. On

the sinking of the minelayer *Ulm* and Hitler's outburst, see naval staff war diary, Sep 11 and 14, and Table Talk Sep 6, evening.

page 525 The Sark raid which provoked the Commando Order is dealt with by the British official historian Professor M. R. D. Foot, in *SOE in France*, page 186; he appears unaware of the reports by Warlimont (T77/1428/1077 *et seq*.). and the First Army (T312/23/9771 *et seq*.). For the consequences, see Greiner's record of Hitler's conference on Oct 5; the naval staff war diary, Oct 8, 9, and 11; Weizsäcker's diary, Oct 11, 1942; interrogations of Warlimont and Baron Horst Treusch von Buttlar-Brandenfels – who testified to Keitel's and Jodl's refusal to draft the actual Commando Order (dated Oct 18, 1942, in naval file PG/31755, or document 498–PS) – and the memoirs of Engel and Scheidt. I also referred to Jodl's own private papers on this controversial affair.

page 525 The Gestapo interrogation of Paul Evans, who initially survived the brave attack on the *Tirpitz*, was submitted to Hitler on Nov 10 and 11, 1942 (T175/124). For the glider attack on Norway, see my book *The Virus House* (London, 1967; *The German Atomic Bomb*, New York, 1968) and the May 1943 correspondence between OKW and foreign ministry on microfilm T77/1428/1071 *et seq*.

page 526 The laconic report by Himmler that 363,211 Russian Jews had been executed will be found on film T175/124; the original is in BA file NS.19/291.

page 527 We found a Polish Intelligence report on Goebbels's speech of Sep 23, 1942 in PRO files FO.371/30928 and 34454; textual examination indicates a high degree of authenticity.

page 527 Himmler's letter to Müller is on NA microfilm T175/68/4325.

page 527 Richthofen added in his diary, quoting Göring: 'Führer wants me to take over List's army group'; nothing came of it. On the same day Greiner confided to his private diary: 'Witch-hunt by Luftwaffe brass against the army goes on. Frightful arse-licking.'

page 528 On the non-exploitation of the Maykop oil, see the Seventeenth Army's report of Aug 19, 1942, in OKW war diary, ii, page 581; the war diary of the OKW economics staff, Sep 12, 1941 (T77/668); and George Blau's study, *The German Campaign in Russia* (US Army, 1955).

page 528 As early as Feb 6, 1943, Hitler admitted to Manstein (diary) that the Luftwaffe field divisions had been a mistake. See too Lieut. General Meindl's report on their operations, May 15, 1943, submitted to Hitler (MD.51/551 *et seq*.).

page 528 Gehlen's branch files (BA files 113/185 and 113/420). See also Greiner's notes on Oct 6, 7, 14, and 30. Jodl said under Russian interrogation, Jun 18, 1945: 'The biggest [Intelligence] failure was in November 1942 when we totally missed the assembly of strong Russian troops on the Sixth Army's flank on the Don. . . After that mistake the Führer mistrusted the General Staff's reconnaissance work.' Jodl levelled much the same criticism in his study of Hitler dated May 22, 1945 (Jodl papers). In the naval staff war diary, Nov 8, 1942, is a hard-hitting analysis of the Abwehr's total failure to de-

tect the North African invasion planning. Specific references to 'Cherbourg' are in Greiner's notes of Oct 5 and 9; the Keitel quotation is from the diary of General Karl-Erik Koehler, Fromm's Chief of Staff (IfZ).

page 528 That Hitler anticipated the Soviet thrust toward Rostov: Greiner's unpublished notes on the Führer's conferences, Oct 25–26, and Admiral Krancke's report in naval staff war diary, Oct 26, 1942.

page 529 The Luftwaffe commander was Waldau (Tenth Air Corps), whose private diaries proved singularly illegible here – a faded blue carbon copy. Among Antonescu's papers the Russians found Keitel's letter of Oct 31, 1942, appealing for more oil for the Italian navy (ND, USSR-244).

page 529 Rommel had copies of the main signals made six months later for his personal papers (T84/R276/0887 *et seq*.). My account also derives from the files of Panzer Army Africa, the diaries of Greiner and Waldau, and post-war testimony of Warlimont, Below, Junge, Scheidt, Kesselring, and others. On Nov 3, Rommel wrote to his wife: 'The battle rages on in unremitting violence. I can't believe in a happy ending, not any longer. [Alfred-Ingemar] Berndt [Rommel's staff officer] is flying to report to the Führer' (T84/R274/0891). Rommel's obtuse methods were undoubtedly the reason for Hitler's order on Nov 5 – recorded by Greiner – 'Command staffs subordinated to the OKW are to be instructed not to report special happenings in routine daily reports.'

page 532 My description of Hitler's train journey on Nov 7–8, 1942, relies on the naval staff war diary, and on post-war manuscripts by Christian (US Army MS D–166), Engel, Below, and Speer; Saur stressed to me that Hitler took the news calmly.

page 532 Backe spent Nov 8 – the day of the Allied invasion of North Africa – with Hitler in Munich, until 3 A.M. 'The Führer spoke on every possible subject, art, the theatre, etc., and even artificial fertilisers (Herbert did not contradict, although his views differed),' wrote Frau Backe in her diary on the eleventh. 'Once the Führer said, "Today it's wonderful, just like when we were fighting for power – every bulletin brings a fresh situation." Just how tense he was inside only became evident when he jumped up immediately as the foreign ministry men came in, and he went over to meet them.'

page 535 My account of the occupation of the rest of France derives from the diary of General Koller, the war diary of the naval staff, the hand-written record kept by Greiner, and documents submitted by Himmler to Hitler (T175/124).

page 536 For the onset of the Russian offensive I used Greiner's hand-written note of Nov 19, 1942; the published version in OKW war diary, ii, page 988, is an entirely post-war concoction.

page 539 My chapters on Stalingrad are largely based on the records of the Sixth Army, of Gehlen's Intelligence branch, and the diary of the chief of army personnel; on the personal diaries of Richthofen, Milch, Manstein, and generals Fiebig and Pickert; on the notes, letters, and manuscripts of staff at Hitler's HQ (Captain Junge, Below, Greiner, Engel, Scheidt); on Zeitzler's

manuscripts (N.63/79, /80, and /101) and interrogations of Heusinger, Göring, Christian, and others; and on fragmentary documents like Hitler's war conference stenograms and Jodl's staff talks with the Japanese (naval staff war diary, annexes, Part C, xv). I was fortunate to find among Milch's private papers the only copy of Major Werner Beumelburg's official manuscript on Stalingrad, dated Jun 8, 1943, and 'based on official files and individual testimony.'

page 540 On the Heim affair, see Kehrig, *op. cit.*, pages 133 *et seq.*, citing the war diary of The Forty-eighth Panzer Corps. Weichs dealt with it in his manuscript (N.19/12); Heim's own version – in *Der Feldzug gegen die Sowjetunion* (Stuttgart, 1962) – is justifiably bitter. See also the war diary of the chief of army personnel, Nov 26, 1942, Jul 28, Aug 16, and Sep 23, 1944. By Sep 25, 1944, Heim was talking freely to his British captors about secret events at Hitler's HQ (SRGG 1063C).

page 540 For the recriminations between the German and Romanian commanders over the collapse, see Greiner's unpublished notes of Dec 8 and 11; and Hitler's war conference on Dec 12, 1942, and talk with Antonescu on Jan 10, 1943.

page 540 Hitler's signal was repeated by Weichs' Army Group B to the Sixth Army at 3:25 P.M., Nov 21 (BA file 75167/6). Richthofen noted in his diary that day: 'Sixth Army thinks it can be kept supplied in its pocket by my Luftflotte. Trying all I can to prove to them it won't work out.' See Johannes Fischer's study of the Stalingrad airlift decision in *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen*, 1969, pages 7 *et seq.* – which relies however on the since-discredited 'Engel diary' for its dates.

page 541 According to Milch, Colonel Artur Eschenauer – Jeschonnek's supply adviser – had warned Jeschonnek that the so-called 1000-kilo supply container could only carry 500 – 680 kilograms of supplies, and the '250-kilo' container only 170 kilograms; their names derived from their *outer shapes* only. Göring refused to pass this fact on to Hitler (diary, May 21, 1946). See also Hitler's conference with Speer, Jan 18, 1943.

The first reference to a 'transport Schwerpunkt with the Fourth Air Force' is on Nov 24, 1942 (MD.17 3390); using Göring's 1943 diaries and other new material I re-examined the controversy in *Göring: A Biography* (London and New York, 1989).

In a speech to Luftwaffe generals on Feb 15 (Koller diary), Göring defended the Stalingrad decision. 'Initially there was no reason to evacuate [Sixth Army], as there was justification for the view that the strong forces could hold out until they were relieved. But then fuel ran out in Stalingrad. "Well, they could still have evacuated on foot!" But there was still hope that Stalingrad could be relieved. Then the Italian front caved in, and with the breakthrough at Kolnikovo the front was torn wide open for hundreds of miles and was beyond repair. If we had fought much harder – in Stalingrad itself too – we would still be in Stalingrad today and it would not have surrendered. Paulus was too soft, didn't make a fortress out of this Stalingrad.'

page 541 The twenty-four hour in-

communicado train journey became a standby-alibi to Hitler for his defeat at Stalingrad. Linge's diary shows that an identical train journey, in November 1943, did indeed last from 4:30 P.M. on the ninth to 6:50 P.M. on the tenth; added to which, while Hitler arrived at the Wolf's Lair in the small hours of Nov 24, 1942, the OKW operations staff train did not arrive until a day later (according to the diaries of Greiner and Thöt).

page 542 An air force table of airlift sorties, Nov 24, 1942, to Feb 3, 1943 (microfilm T321/18/8846 *et seq.*), suggests that Greiner's figures are low. Greiner's note on the food situation at Stalingrad echoes General Fiebig's diary, Nov 26. 'The Sixth Army does not take an unfavourable view of its tactical position, if it can get 300 cubic metres [about 210 tons] of gasoline and 30 tons of tank ammunition a day; food is said to be adequate for one month.'

page 543 Initially Hitler's optimism about Stalingrad was widely shared. The OKW diarist Greiner wrote in a private letter on Nov 27, 1942: 'The Russian offensive still gives us fewest headaches, as we are entitled to the confident expectation that the situation can be cleared up in a short time. . . Far worse is our situation in North Africa: everything depends on hanging on to Tunis and western Libya and Tripoli at least, and that's not going to be easy against the onslaught of superior British and American forces from east and west.' Jodl echoed this attitude to the Japanese on Dec 4. 'Russian attackers will soon be checked. Manstein is on the way. Perhaps next Russian attack on Italian army. German forces standing by. Situation in Africa indubitably more difficult. We now assume Soviet Union has some thirteen thousand aircraft and three thousand tanks; quality declining.' Weizsäcker too wrote in his diary, Dec 9: 'From the eastern front too our military HQ is emitting favourable noises. Even Stalingrad, where some two hundred thousand men are cut off, no longer impresses our command: the view is that the eastern front won't suffer any grave strategic collapse this winter.'

page 542 Manstein's appreciation of Nov 24 is in BA file 39694/3b and in the diary of Army Group Don (N.507/1). Under OCMH interrogation on Sep 10, 1945, Heusinger confirmed that Manstein was initially of the view that the Sixth Army's withdrawal was *not* necessary. Engel's 'diary' entry of Nov 26 ('Long discussion on Manstein's appreciation of situation, proposal to withdraw Sixth Army. . .') is further reason to treat this source with caution – as Manfred Kehrig, the official West German historian (*Stalingrad*, Stuttgart, 1974), has also warned, Kehrig's history uses the diaries of Count Johann von Kielmansegg, of the General Staff operations branch, and Major Thilo, who dealt with Army Group B affairs in that branch; but Kehrig did not procure either the Richthofen diary or Greiner's papers, which I have used.

page 543 A typescript narrative of Rommel's meeting with Hitler and Göring is in the war diary of Panzer Army Africa (T313/472/10 16ff); the shorthand record by his adjutant is in his papers (T84/259).

page 544 On Arnim's appointment, see his MS memoirs, BA: N.61/4.

page 545 On Abwehr operations I used a memo by Canaris of Dec 14 (Ritter's AA files, serial 1105); Lahousen's diary, Dec 21; and Canaris's memos for Keitel, dated Dec 9, and talk with him on Dec 11 (AL/1933).

page 545 Bormann's memo on Hitler's conversation with Anton Mussert on Dec 10, 1942, is in BA file NS.19/*neu* ISS6. Keitel made similar remarks to Canaris on Dec 20 (AL/1933).

page 546 Himmler's hand-written agenda for discussion with Hitler on Dec 10 survives (T175/94/5330); Himmler checked Item 3, 'Jews in France, ✓,' and noted, '*abschaffen*'–'dispose of.' In his subsequent memo to the Gestapo chief, Heinrich Müller, however, he used the milder words *verhaftet* und *abtransportiert* – 'arrested' and 'transported away' (T175/103/5558).

There are other references to the 'Jewish problem' in Himmler's files at this time. On Oct 2, 1942 he wrote of his determination to extract the Jews from their protected status within important arms factories in Poland too. 'It will then be our aim to replace these Jewish workers by Poles and to merge most of these Jewish concentration-camp workshops into a very few big Jewish concentration-camp factories, as far as practicable in the east of the Generalgouvernement. But there too the Jews must one day, in accordance with the Führer's wish, disappear [*verschwinden*]' (T175/22/7359).

Early in September 1942 the London *Daily Telegraph* published reports from Warsaw that seven thousand Jews a day were being deported from the ghetto and executed – a total of 700,000 by May 1942. 'In many cases gas chambers had been used.' In a Top Secret telegram Goebbels's ministry asked Hans Frank for an explanation (Yivo file Occ E2–72).

By roundabout route via New York, the same report reached Himmler; writing to Gestapo chief Müller on Nov 30 he called it a 'very interesting [press] announcement about a memorandum written by Dr. [Stephen F.] Wise [President of the American Jewish Congress] in September 1942,' and he commented: 'Given the scale of the Jewish migration, I'm not surprised that such rumours crop up somewhere in the world. We both know there's a high death rate among the Jews who are put to work. But you are to guarantee to me that at each location the cadavers of these deceased Jews are either burned or buried, and that nothing else can happen with the cadavers wherever they are. You are to investigate at once in all quarters to find out whether there have been any such abuses as the – no doubt mendacious – rumours disseminated around the world claim. All such abuses are to be reported to me on the SS oath of honour' (T175/68/4325). That letter was no doubt 'window-dressing,' designed to put Himmler in the clear.

On Nov 24, 1942 *The Times* (London) published a dispatch from the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem with an unmistakable core of truth. Himmler's office forwarded it with a non-committal letter to the SS Reich Main Security Office in Berlin 'for your attention' (T175/68/4406). On Feb 14, 1943 the same newspaper published a report received by the British Section of the World Jewish Congress from Central Europe, claiming that deportations from Germany

were continuing, and that mass exterminations in Poland were proceeding, in one place at the rate of six thousand daily. Rudolf Brandt, Himmler's adjutant, sent the news report to Kaltenbrunner's office. 'On the instructions of the Reichsführer SS I am transmitting to you herewith a press dispatch on the accelerated extermination [*Ausrottung*] of the Jews in Occupied Europe' (T175/68/4398).

page 547 Hitler's thought-processes can be reconstructed from the stenogram of his war conference on Dec 12, 1942 and from Greiner's unpublished note of the same date.

page 548 Italian accounts of the conference are in *Comando Supremo* files (T821/21/951 *et seq.*, and T821/457/409 *et seq.*). On Dec 19, 1942, Greiner noted: 'Italians had urged some kind of arrangement with Stalin, but this is rejected by Führer out of hand, as even without weakening eastern front there is enough strength for the southern.' As Weizsäcker commented (diary, Dec 25), it was hardly surprising that Ciano got this reply: 'Talk like this can only be direct and without witnesses, and between the Duce and the Führer – not by Duce to General von Rintelen, Duce to Göring, Ciano to the Führer.'

page 553 From the diaries of Goebbels and Bormann, and Speer's *Chronik* (FD.3037/49) it is possible to reconstruct the origins of the formidable three-man cabal established late in 1942, to extract more effort from the nation – and in particular 'one million new soldiers' (as Goebbels announced at a ministerial conference on Jan 5). Goebbels was however given only a consultative role by Hitler's formal decree setting up the Council of Three on Jan 13, 1943 (HZ, MA – 470, pages 4910 *et seq.*). See also the diary of Colonel Gerhard Kühne of the OKH (IfZ).

page 554 According to the stenographer's diary, the special conference at which Hitler presumably planned the Kharkov offensive lasted from 10 to 11:45 P.M. on New Year's Eve.

page 554 The number of transport aircraft on hand always vastly outnumbered those that actually flew, as Milch's records show.

page 554 The cassette was handed to Göring on his fiftieth birthday, Jan 12, 1943, by Keitel. Hitler's private sources of Intelligence – like the letter from Winrich Behr to Colonel von Below quoted – must not be under-estimated.

page 555 On the Arctic fiasco, I used the naval staff war diary (especially Jan 23 and Mar 10, 1943) and the report in Raeder's personal file (PG/31762), and material from Puttkamer and Junge. For Speer s campaign against Raeder and the admiral's resignation, I used Raeder's files, Speer's note on his discussion with Hitler on Jan 3–5, and his frank postwar admission to Milch that he had caused Raeder's downfall (Milch diary, Jul 13, 1947). In fact, as Raeder wrote reminding Hitler on Jan 14, 1943, he had 'thrice given Admiral Dönitz preferential promotion' during the war. See also Krancke's memo of Feb 13, 1943 (PG/31747).

page 555 Göring privately admitted that while he was not worried about the situation 'it's not quite clear to me how we are intending to end this war' (Weizsäcker diary, Feb 17, 1943).

page 556 Dönitz's visit to Hitler on Jan 25, 1943, is confirmed by Bor-

mann's diary and Puttkamer's memoirs; his 'connivance' at the scrapping of the capital ships emerges from the telephone call recorded in the next day's naval staff war diary.

page 556 The appointment of Milch is described in his diaries, in an OCMH interrogation of Göring, Jul 20, 1945, in Greiner's note for Jan 16, 1943, and in Milch's unpublished memoirs. Speer announced to Central Planning on Jan 26 that Milch would be 'away in the east for probably six to eight weeks' (MD.47/9236).

page 557 Göring is quoted in Koller's diary, Feb 15, 1943.

page 558 On Hitler's new propaganda directive after Stalingrad see Goebbels's ministerial conference on Jan 24; Berger's letter to Himmler, Jan 29 (T175/124/9596); naval staff diary Jan 24, Weizsäcker's diary Feb 12, and Goebbels's diary, Mar 9, 1943.

page 559 The stenographer was Karl Thöt, whose diary is in my collection (IfZ).

page 560 Rosenberg's querulous conferences with Hitler are dealt with in Himmler's files, in Etzdorf's note of Feb 23, 1943, and in Goebbels's unpublished diary, Feb 16.

page 561 The Russian document – originating from General Krupennikov, 1941–42 deputy chief of Soviet replacements – is in naval files, PG/32602/3; the statistics are quoted by Greiner in an unpublished note of Jan 8 and Jan 23; by Hitler to Antonescu on Apr 12, and by Gehlen's department in a lecture on Apr 16 (BA file H3/319). The quotation on Hitler's speech, Feb 7, 1943, is from Frau Ursula Backe's diary. There are similar words in a letter by SS Captain Johannes Göhler, writing on Sep 7, 1944: 'On this point even the Führer yesterday said, "Those who don't want to fight don't deserve to survive."'

page 561 Hitler's remarks are quoted in Milch's conferences soon after (MD.35/4685 and /3326, and MD.18/4735).

page 562 Richthofen was disappointed when Manstein told him the outcome of his talk with Hitler (diary, Feb 8, 1943). 'Führer was calm and composed, Manstein visibly bucked up. Naturally no discussion whatsoever of another kind of command or command-organisation, although this was just what Manstein was there for.' Richthofen advised the field marshal to keep a tighter grip on the panzer divisions, with short, sharp forays – copying Russian tactics; Manstein replied that his commanders would not oblige. Richthofen wrote: 'I told him quite cheerfully that in my far-off youth I had once heard a rumour that in military affairs it was possible to issue *orders*.' On Kluge's trip to Hitler, I used Schlabrendorff's Aug 1944 testimony under Gestapo interrogation (NS.6/4 I), Zeitzler's manuscripts (N.63/80 and 101), and Engel's notes.

page 563 The quotation is from Hitler's secret speech on Jun 22, 1944 (NS.26/51).

page 564 Todt described the power radiated by Hitler, in a private letter to a professor dated Sep 30, 1933: 'The most beautiful thing about my work is that it takes me close to the Führer. I am convinced that any man who can spend ten minutes a week with the Führer achieves many times his normal output

of work.'

page 564 Traudl Humps, who had joined Hitler's staff in November and in April 1943 married SS Lieutenant Hans Junge, his manservant; she made her typescript memoirs available to me.

*page 565*The final paragraphs, about Rjukan, are based on Sonnleitner's memoirs. See too my history of German atomic bomb research, *The Virus House* (London and New York, 1967).

page 567 The appointment book kept by Hans Junge and Heinz Linge from Mar 22 to Jun 20, 1943, lay in a waterlogged condition in 1945, and ended up in the Hoover Library, California; it was restored at my request in 1965. I have deposited a transcript with the IfZ.

page 568 General Karl Eibl (Twenty-fourth Panzer Corps), holder of Germany's second highest medal, lost his leg in the blast and died. Hitler did not tell Mussolini until Apr 23, 1944.

page 568 Hitler's anxiety to spare his allies' feelings is plain from his order to Eighth Army, Feb 14 (in its war diary appendices, file 36199/9); from Ritter's memo to Ribbentrop, Mar 20 (serial 1006); and from Scherff's letter to Jodl, Jun 25, 1943 (T77/1035/7945).

page 569 Allied 'plans to invade Portugal' were presumably deliberate disinformation. They are mentioned in the naval staff diary, Feb 4, and Hitler's meeting with Dönitz on the ninth, and in Canaris's diary Feb 9 (AL/1933), and in a memo of the tenth in naval file PG/31747. Canaris admittedly saw no reason to believe them, but pointed toward Spanish Morocco (naval staff diary, Feb 13). Finally, on Apr 25, 1943, the naval staff diary sarcastically asked what had happened to the invasion so confidently predicted by the OKW in Portugal for Feb 22.

page 569 Professor Charles Burdick wrote of German planning for Spain, 1942–43, in *WR*, 1964, pages 164 *et seq.*; I also used the unpublished diaries of Greiner and Canaris (especially Feb 9, 1943: AL/1933) and of Richthofen, and Junge's memo on Hitler's conference of Feb 10 (PG/31747). The German-Spanish secret protocol of Feb 11, 1943 will be found on AA microfilms of Ribbentrop's office files, serial F3, page 0355, p. 532. Hitler made his remark about Rommel at the conference on Aug 31, 1944 (Heiber, page 614); Goebbels quoted Göring similarly on Mar 2, 1943. Canaris's lengthy report on Tunis after a visit there on Feb 27, 1943, is in file AL/1933.

page 570 On the fighting in Tunis: Goebbels's unpublished diary, Feb 1943; war conference stenogram, Mar 4; Rommel's private letters (T84/R274); Kesselring's memoirs; the war diaries of the naval staff and OKW, and Greiner's hand-written draft for the latter; correspondence between Hitler and Mussolini (T586/405), and Ritter's AA files, serial 5757. On Mar 15 Richthofen entered Jeschonnek's observations in his diary: 'Rommel very low, nerves finished too. For the first time Kesselring's fixed grin was wiped off his face. Only the Führer is still optimistic. What's certain is that in the long run Africa can't be held, for supply reasons.' See too the OKW correspondence with Rommel in the Fifth Army war diary (T313/416/9057 *et seq.*).

page 573 The undeniable restoration of the generals' faith in Hitler that spring emerges from Greiner's unpub-

lished note of Mar 14, and from an entry in the anti-Hitler conspirator Hassell's diary two weeks later. 'The generals are enough to drive you around the bend,' Etzdorf had told him in despair. 'Now that everything's going better again, everything's apparently okay: "The Führer has turned out right again." – Hopeless!' My footnote is based on security documents in the BA Schumacher Collection, file 487, and on Canaris's journey report (AL/1933).

On the fabled assassination attempt at Smolensk, see Fabian von Schlabrendorff, *Offiziere gegen Hitler* (Zürich, 1946), and Peter Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, *Staatsstreich*, *Attentat* (Munich, 1969), chap. ix. In the conspirators' earlier accounts there are irritating discrepancies. Was their alleged bomb disguised as a brandy (round) or Cointreau (square) bottle? Was the Abwehr explosive that Canaris mentioned used? Or British-made Clam explosives with magnetic fastenings? Was the packet handed to Colonel Heinz Brandt to carry or did Schlabrendorff himself 'place it under Hitler's seat'? We can only speculate. Brandt himself *never* flew in Hitler's plane, according to Schaub's manuscripts.

page 577 Himmler's report on population movements dated Jan 20, 1943, is in BA file R.43 II/1411a. A statistical study by Dr. Richard Korherr on the Soviet manpower reservoir definitely went to Hitler in May 1943 (Himmler files, T175/54/6437 *et seq.*).

page 577 Himmler had ordered Korherr to make a statistical analysis of the Final Solution, by letter of Jan 18, 1943 (T175/18/1557), explaining that Kaltenbrunner's office 'lacked the necessary expert precision.' The draft and shortened final reports, and Himmler's related correspondence, are on microfilm T175/103/5017 *et seq.*). As the ribbon copy of the shorter version is still in Himmler's files, it may not even have gone to Hitler. Nor did several letters which at about the time reached Dr. Hans Lammers alleging that Jews were being methodically exterminated in Poland (ND, NG–1903 and IMT, xi, page 62).

page 579 For the contingency planning for an invasion of Sweden, see Wolf Junge's manuscript; the naval staff plans in its war diary annexe, Part C, iii; the naval staff war diary, Oct 23, 1943; and the OKW war diary.

page 579 According to the manservant's register, Hitler saw Horthy three times: at 5:30 P.M. on Apr 16, and at 12:10 and 5 P.M. on the 17th. Three corresponding records exist, by interpreter Paul Schmidt; as both Horthy and Schmidt claim in their memoirs that Schmidt was absent during the first meeting, it is probable that as in 1944 (see Jodl diary, Mar 17, 1944) the conference room at Klessheim was bugged with hidden microphones.

page 580 On the deportation of Hungary's Jews, see the AA's letter to Bormann, Mar 9, 1943 (serial 5231 pages E310707 *et seq.*)., and the Abwehr's security objections – in a letter to the AA – against allowing large units of Hungarian Jews to come near German military movements (*ibid.*, K206893). Schmidt's notes on Ribbentrop's suggestion that the Jews be destroyed or put in concentration camps was cited in the IMT records; Horthy copied the wording into his 1953 memoirs but put

the words into Hitler's mouth!

Secret Hungarian records (in which of course there would have been no need to employ euphemisms) do not echo the wording in such bluntness. In a draft letter to Hitler on May 7, 1943, Horthy included one sentence – later deleted – reading: 'Your Excellency further reproached me that my government does not proceed with stamping out Jewry with the same radicalism as is practised in Germany.' In his discussion with the Hungarian envoy Sztójay a few days later Ribbentrop went no further than to remind him that Hitler had (in the summer of 1942) decreed that 'by the summer of 1943 all Jews of Germany and the German occupied countries are to be moved to the eastern. *i.e.*, Russian, territories' (Miklos Szinai and László Szúcs (eds.), *The Confidential Papers of Admiral Horthy* (Budapest, 1965, at pages 248–257, reproducing documents in the National Archives, Budapest).

page 580 On the Rosenberg – Koch squabble: the Goebbels diaries and Himmler files (T175/124 and /171); BDC file SS 981; Richthofen's diary, May 24, 1943; the stenogram of Hitler's conference with Keitel and Zeitzler on Jun 8; Etzdorf's note of Apr 13; Ribbentrop's memo on the Vlasov Operation, Apr 6 (Etzdorf's file, serial 1247); Bormann's memo of May 19 (BA file R 58/1005); Gehlen's files, containing Hewel's memo of May 24 (T81/219/9474 *et seq.*).; the diary of Colonel Heinz-Danko Herre, of Gehlen's staff; Kluge's conference with General Reinhardt of the Third Panzer Army, Jun 17 (in the Army's war diary, annexes, H 12–33/5); Etzdorf's teletype to the AA, Jun 17 (serial 364), and Lahousen's diary, Jun 21, 1943.

page 582 'Citadel': Dr. Ernst Klink's *Das Gesetz des Handelns* (Stuttgart, 1966), supersedes studies by generals F. W. Hauck and Gotthard Heinrici in *WR*, 1965, and by Eike Middeldorf, *ibid.*, 1953. My own 'Citadel' narrative benefits from a number of sources not available to Klink – notably the Richthofen diary and the manservant's diary, which pinpoints the date of Zeitzler's visit as Apr 21, 1943.

page 582 On Model's visit: Ninth Army war diary, Apr 27–28 (BA, 34739/2) and annexes, viii (35212/2); Model's appreciation, Apr 25 (35939/12); Junge diary, Apr 27, 1943; war conference, May 18, 1944 (stenogram); and Guderian's manuscript, Mar 1949 (IfZ, zs.57). Hitler's order of Apr 29 is mentioned in the OKW war diary, Jul 5; the resulting OKH order of Apr 30 is in the Fourth Panzer Army's war diary, annexes (34888/23) and the Ninth Army's war diary, annexes (34890/1); for the Luftwaffe view, Richthofen's diary contains an appreciation dated May 1, 1943.

page 583 Guderian's notes on his tank conferences with Hitler are on microfilm T78/622. I also used Saur's testimony (FD3049/49).

page 583 Richthofen glued Jeschonnek's account of the May 4, 1943, Munich conference into his diary, May 25. On the fifth Richthofen himself wrote: 'Rumour has it that some kinds of conference between Guderian and the Führer and Zeitzler have brought an element of uncertainty into opinions. Perhaps – and the interpolation of Guderian indicates this – it is hoped that

minor technical improvements will result in major military changes. Of course this is pure rubbish – they haven't resulted in decisive victories in any war yet, but again and again they are tried for by us.' On May 24 he told Jeschonnek that the Russians would build more by way of defensive positions in six weeks than the Germans could hope to increase their striking power. There is no evidence that either Guderian or Manstein opposed the delay. In 1958 correspondence with Zeitzler, General Theodor Busse loyally quoted Manstein as telling Hitler, 'The attack will be tough, but I think it'll succeed.' But Kempf clearly recalled telephoning Zeitzler three days later, furious at the delay; Zeitzler replied that the general's call was 'grist to his mill. He [Zeitzler] had desperately opposed any further postponement of "Citadel", but only Field Marshal von Kluge had supported him' (N.63/12). This is supported by Kempf's memo on the telephone conversation in the Eighth Army war diary (36188/20).

page 584 Hitler's words to Warlimont are quoted in a naval staff memo on Hitler's Berghof conference, May 1, 1943 (PG/31747).

page 584 On Hitler's speech of May 7, 1943, I used the diaries of Junge, Bormann, Himmler, and Goebbels.

page 585 A diary kept by Rommel from May 1943 onward exists and has been used (AL/1708). For Rommel's anti-Italian feelings, see the Goebbels diary, May 10–13, and Rommel's private letters of May 10–13 (T84/R274).

page 586 Connoisseurs of British Intelligence operations will find the file on the corpse and its documents in German naval archives, PG/33216; they should also read the naval staff diary, May 1943, and microfilm t78/343. On May 25 Goebbels wrote in his diary that Canaris 'energetically refuted' his hypothesis that the documents were deliberately planted.

page 587 Dönitz's famous admission to Hitler on May 14, 1943, that his U-boat offensive had collapsed, caused a sensation at the Wolf's Lair; see Goebbels's diary, and Rommel's diary and private letters (T84/R275/0324). For Hitler's plan to strengthen the Balkans, see his war conference on May 20 (Heiber, pages 238 *et seq.*).; the date of this is now firmly established by the manservant's diary.

page 587 Captain Wolf Junge's handwritten account of Hitler's conference of May 15, 1943 is in naval archives (PG/31747). Rommel's diary also refers to it.

page 589 Hewel's memo for Ribbentrop, Jun 25, 1943, is in Ritter's AA file (serial 1462). See also Scherff's letter to Jodl, Jun 25 (T77/1035/7945), and the naval staff's indignant protests at aspersions cast by Hitler on German shortcomings in supplying North Africa (war diary, Jun 29 and Aug 5). Hitler even summarily deleted three pages of Goebbels's proposed speech of Jun 5 because they referred to North Africa (NS.6/129).

page 590 The quotations are from Hitler's conference with Konstantin von Neurath – son of the famous pre-1938 foreign minister – on May 20, 1943 (Heiber, pages 220 *et seq.*).; see also Rommel's diary.

page 590 The Berghof menu is pasted into Eva Braun's album (NA, 242-EB-22-

33a). Morell meticulously listed all Hitler's wartime meals on index cards (copies in my collection, IfZ). In his diary, Goebbels wrote on Jun 25: 'Little is left of the physical fitness we always used to marvel at in him.'

page 591 Canaris's record of his talks with Warlimont and Rommel's chief of staff is in the Canaris diary, AL/1933, which unfortunately ends at this point; see also the Lahousen diary, Jun 4.

page 593 Guderian's note on his Jun 16 conference with Hitler is in BA file H16/236. According to the naval staff war diary, Jun 25, the General Staff expected tank production to increase from four hundred to one thousand three hundred a month by autumn. Zeitzler's naval liaison officer emphasised the uncertainty being injected into the eastern front by the Mediterranean situation. But 'the troops' morale is high, offset only by the bad news reaching them on the effects of enemy air raids at home' (*ibid.*). According to Goebbels's diary, Jun 25, Zeitzler had visited Hitler on the twenty-fourth – no doubt to agree on the final postponement of 'Citadel.'

page 594 On the dispute between Frank and the SS, I rely on Nuremberg documents NG–3556, 2233–PS, NO–2202, and 437–PS; see also Hassell's diary, May 15, 1943, with its authentic detail by Frank's administration chief on the SS mass execution of Jews in Poland. On Frank's meeting with Hitler on May 9, I used the diaries of Goebbels, Frank, and Bormann, and the latter's memo of May 11 (BA, Schumacher Collection, file 371). On May 31, Frank called a big security-conference in Cracow; Himmler agreed to send representatives, apologising in a letter to Frank on May 26: 'The evacuation of the last two hundred fifty thousand Jews, which will doubtless cause unrest for some weeks, must be completed as rapidly as possible despite all the difficulties,' (T175/128/4157 *et seq.*).

page 594 Himmler's talk with Hitler, Jun 19, 1943: see his files, T175/94/5096 *et seq.*, T175/40 and T175/76; and T175/94/5098.

page 595 On the Schirachs' last visit to the Berghof (Jun 1943) I collected testimony from both Schirachs, Otto Günsche, secretary Christa Schroeder, Marion Schönmann – whose wording I have followed – Traudl Humps (who learned about it from her husband, Hans Junge), and the cameraman Walter Frentz; also from the Goebbels diary, Jun 25, and Table Talk, Jun 24, 1943 (evening). Traces of Hitler's 'scale-pan' argument also surface in Table Talks on Sep 14 and Nov 5, 1941, and in Goebbels's diary, May 23 and 30, 1942.

page 595 My transcript of Göring's 1943 diaries is in IfZ.

page 596 Professor Ernst Heinkel describes the aircraft designers' Jun 27, 1943 conference with Hitler in his memoirs, pages 459 *et seq.* I also used Bormann's diary, Speer's notes, Messerschmitt's interrogations and personal papers (FD.4355/45, vi), and Wolf Junge's manuscript.

page 596 Envoy Hans Thomsen's telegram of Jun 21, 1943 is in Steengracht's file, serial 191. The 'gentleman' was Peter Kleist (see his book *European Tragedy*, pages 144 *et seq.*). Subsequently the Russians claimed that Alexandrov – a former counsellor of their Berlin embassy, by Jun 1943 head of the German

division of the Soviet foreign ministry – was in Australia in June 1943 (see *Izvestia*, Jul 29, 1947). Not so. The Jun 22, 1943 announcement was made in *Pravda*. The Jul 1 article was by N. Malinin in *Voina i rabochnii klass* (War and the Working Class).

page 597 General Hans Friessner (Twenty-third Corps) wrote the manuscript record of Hitler's speech which I quote. I found it in his personal papers, BA file H 14–23/1, fols. 121–9. In his diary, Rommel wrote: 'Evening, big conference in outbuilding [of General Staff HQ]. Every field marshal and field commander present, and some corps commanders. Führer gives picture of the situation and the planned operations. Afterward a get-together until 2:50 A.M.' A short verbatim extract of the speech is on microfilm T77/778/0773 *et seq*. See also Manstein, pages 495 *et seq*. The panzer general von Knobelsdorff was overheard on May 14, 1945, describing the evening to a fellow prisoner thus: 'Hitler promised us the world. . . Naturally we never got it. Hermann [Göring] sat next to him, wilting more and more – a complete dullard. He kept eating pills' (X-P.4).

page 599 In fact about three *thousand* Allied ships were involved. Rommel's diary states, Jul 10, 1943: 'Noon war conference with Führer. British and Americans landed on Sicily with paratroops and landing craft. Three hundred ships. – 9.30 P.M. to 1:40 A.M. discussion with Führer.'

page 599 The view at Hitler's HQ was that Stalin's Jul 12, 1943 counter-offensive was a last desperate fling. Milch – who saw Hitler the next day – reassured his staff on the nineteenth. 'The Russians have *got* to attack. They have no option. They have such ghastly domestic problems, and so little hope that things will get better, that they say, "If we don't finish the war this summer and winter at the latest, then for us it'll be all over"' (MD.22/6076). And see Backe's remarks, quoted by his wife in a letter to Heydrich's widow on Jul 25. 'My husband thinks it good that the Russians are attacking – it's a sign of their weakness: they *have* to.' Richthofen's words, written after Hitler's noon conference on Jul 28, are very similar (diary), as are Goebbels's that same day.

page 599 The captured letters are analysed in a report of Jul 7, 1943, shown to Hitler (H3/644).

page 602 There is a record of the talk with the Italian ambassador in Milch's files (MD.53/1116 *et seq*.).

page 603 This fragment of Mussolini's diary, dated Aug 19, 1943, is in AA files, serial 715, pages 263729 *et seq*.; for the official Italian record, see Mussolini's papers (T586/405/394 *et seq*.). and the records of the *Comando Supremo* (T821/251/955 *et seq*.).

page 605 Himmler's Intelligence report to Bormann, Jul 19, 1943, is in the Reichsführer's files (T175/53/7178ff).

page 606 For the Abwehr's mistaken belief that the Allies would soon invade the Balkans – which culminated in Hitler's directive of Jul 26, 1943 – see the naval staff and OKW war diaries, Jul 28.

page 607 My narrative of events at Hitler's HQ is based on Milch's diary, on Admiral Krancke's reports (in naval staff diary), on Goebbels's diary, and on the stenograms of Hitler's dramatic war

conferences on Jul 25 (Heiber).

page 608 I drew on signals in the naval staff war diary's annexes, Part C, xiv (PG/32216), the diaries of Rommel, Richthofen, the OKW, and Josef Schröder's authoritative history *Italiens Kriegsaustritt 1943* (Göttingen, 1969).

page 608 Himmler telephoned Kaltenbrunner at noon on Jul 28. 'Reports from Italy. – Haul in all dissidents. – Morale after raids on Hamburg.'

page 609 Rommel's diary expands on Richthofen's dramatic record of Jul 26, 1943. '12 noon land at Rastenburg [on return from Greece]. Drive to Wolf's Lair immediately. . . . Situation in Italy still confused. No news yet on how Mussolini's overthrow happened. On king's orders Marshal Badoglio has taken office as head of government. It's to be expected that despite pronouncements by king and Badoglio Italy will drop out of the war or at least that the British will undertake fresh major landings in Upper Italy. . . I'm hoping to be sent into Italy soon.' See also the record of Hitler's conferences with Admiral Dönitz over these days.

page 610 Junge described the relief created at Hitler's HQ by Churchill's gloating speech. The naval staff war diary commented, on Jul 27, that it was ideal for German purposes, and added the next day: 'In comments on Churchill's speech the Italians paint out that it has unmasked as pure hypocrisy the British claim to be fighting only fascism.'

page 610 On the German-monitored Churchill telephone conversation, see OKW war diary Jul 29 and Aug 3, 1943; Himmler's telephone call to SS General Gottlob Berger at 11 P.M. on Jul 29 ('Churchill–Roosevelt conversation'); and Sir Alexander Cadogan's diary, Jul 28: 'PM got Pres[ident] on the telephone . . . Ike authorised to put out a proclamation. PM mainly preoccupied about our prisoners.' Admiral Voss warned the naval staff on Jul 30 that the situation was more acute 'as there is further evidence that the Italian government is playing a double game.' See also Rommel's diary, Aug 4, 1943.

page 611 Rommel wrote with relish on Jul 30, 1943: 'I'm going to enjoy this new job far more than the South-east command. . . We can just guess what the Italians have up their sleeve now that Mussolini's resigned: they'll change sides, lock, stock, and barrel.'

page 611 For the faulty Intelligence on Italy, see the war diaries of the OKW, Jul 30–31, and Aug 3 and 5, 1943, and of the naval staff, Jul 29. On Canaris's role: Lahousen diary, Jul 29 – Aug 3, 1943, and Walther Huppenkothen's 1945 manuscript 'Canaris and Abwehr' in BDC files.

page 611 Ribbentrop described his telephone call to Hitler in a later (Dec 30, 1944) talk with Ambassador Filippo Anfuso (in AA files). The Italian records of the talks with Keitel and Ribbentrop on Aug 6 are in *Comando Supremo* files(T821/251/777 *et seq.*).

page 612 Professor Hermann Giesler's record of the Führer's conference with Ley and himself on Aug 20, 1943 is in the present files of the Munich city planning bureau.

page 613 Rommel commented on the Stalin rumours in his diary, Aug 9, 1943: 'If they are founded on truth, they open up undreamed of new possibilities to us.' Hitler's reflection is quoted from

his conference with Dönitz a few days later.

page 614 Rommel's letter commenting on Mussolini's departure from the European stage was written on Aug 6 to his wife (T84/R27/0352).

page 615 Rommel's diary contains a complete account of the Aug 15, 1943 meeting at Bologna. (The Italian map was later published in *Das Reich*, Oct 10, and see the *Völkischer Beobachter*, Oct 23–24.)

page 615 Helmut Heiber wrote on King Boris's death in *VfZ*, 1961, pages 384 *et seq*. The three German doctors are all dead – Eppinger and de Crinis as 1945 suicides. The HQ stenographer Krieger recalled – in a post-war letter – that Hitler issued strict instructions to Raeder, Keitel, and the other prominent guests at the funeral in Sofia 'on no account to accept food or drink offered to them there, but to feign stomach upsets and only eat the food they had brought with them from the Führer's HQ.'

page 616 Prince Philipp of Hesse described under American interrogation (Jul 21, 1945) how Hitler had treated him almost like a son, spending hours every night talking with him of his plans for the reconstruction of Germany. Philipp – who was Oberpräsident of Hesse-Nassau province – 'had realised that he was probably in some sense a prisoner [at Hitler's HQ], and his urgent requests to return to his post when Kassel came in for heavy air attacks [on Jul 28 and 30, 1943] had been refused.'

page 617 The quotation is from Himmler's speech to Reich propaganda officials, Jan 28, 1944 (T175/94/4784 *et seq*.).

page 617 The code name 'Baroque' figures in Himmler's agenda for discussion with Hitler about Mar 17, 1943 and in several telephone conversations, *e.g.*, with Kaltenbrunner on Nov 2, 1943 (T84/25). Himmler laughingly revealed the whole story in his speech to the gauleiters on Aug 3, 1944 (see *VfZ*, 1953, pages 375 *et seq*.).

Under CIC interrogation the Gestapo officials Walther Huppenkothen and Willi Litzenberg testified to Hitler's knowledge of the Himmler–Popitz rendezvous (which is also noted in Himmler's pocket diary, Aug 26, 1943). As Dr. Franz Reuter related in his monograph, 'Der 20. Juli und seine Vorgeschichte' (in British secret files), Himmler 'seemed not satisfied at all with the outcome of the conversation.' See also Goebbels's diary, Sep 23, 1943, and the Hassell diaries.

page 618 The agent's message was cabled by Himmler's staff to Fritz Darges, Bormann's adjutant at Hitler's HQ, late on Aug 25, 1943 (T175/117/2393).

page 619 In addition to the AA record of Hitler's talk with Antonescu, a Romanian version exists in Antonescu's files, 'Conversatia dintre Domnul Maresal Antonescu si Fuhrerul Adolf Hitler' (ND, USSR–235).

page 621 For the events of Sep 8, 1943, I used the diaries of Linge, Goebbels, the naval staff (and the latter's annexes, Part C, xiv) and the OKW. Hitler and Ribbentrop described the events – with Badoglio's and Roatta's manifold protestations of loyalty – frequently afterward, *e.g.*, to the Bulgarian envoy Sagoroff on Oct 6 (AA serial 68, pages 49298 *et seq*.).; to Saffet Arikan, the Turkish ambassador, on Oct 7 (AA se-

rial 5452, pages E366598 *et seq.*).; and in Hitler's secret speech on Jan 27, 1944 (BA Schumacher collection, file 365). The actual timing of the Italian announcement clearly took Hitler by surprise. Himmler – as his diary shows – had flown away on leave to Bavaria that morning, only to be recalled by a telephone call from Hitler's HQ at 8:20 P.M., the very moment that Jodl's order was being cabled to the various HQ's: 'Codeword "Axis' takes effect immediately' (T77/792/ 1641).

page 622 The prince's arrest is described by Goebbels; and by Baron von Steengracht in an overheard conversation with Papen on Jun 27, 1945 (X-P.18); and by the prince himself under interrogation by the US State Department.

page 623 On the East Wall controversy I relied on Speer's records of conferences with Hitler, and his *Chronik*; on Führer decrees in file FD.3049/49; on the naval staff war diary, Jul 19, 1943; on OKW records on microfilm T77/778; and on Küchler's memo on his conference with Hitler on Sep 11, 1943 (Army Group North, war diary).

page 624 Vice Admiral Wilhelm Meisel first recorded Hitler's hopes for an East-West split at the Führer's evening war conference on Aug 28, 1943.

page 625 A report by Likus on Soviet feelers, addressed to Ribbentrop on Aug 9, 1943, is in AA files (serial 146, pages 130779 *et seq.*). Kleist describes his contact with Edgar Klauss in *Zwischen Hitler und Stalin* (Bonn, 1950). Klauss's original documents now in possession of Dr. Bernd Martin of Freiburg show that Klauss's Soviet contacts were genuine. It was not until late September that these indirect German approaches were reported by the Soviet legation in Stockholm to their US colleagues (*FRUS*, 1943, iii, pages 698 *et seq.*). Kaltenbrunner discusses Kleist's soundings with Klauss, Astakhov, and Dekanozov under interrogation in NA, RG.219, file XE 000440.

page 626 Hitler's decrees carving up northern Italy will be found in FD.3049/49.

page 627 Several entries in Himmler's telephone notes relate to problems with the Ciano family. After Himmler and Kaltenbrunner visited Hitler on Sep 15, 1943, the two SS potentates talked about 'Situation in Rome. Commun[ists]. Italian guests; villa for Musso family. Jewish Question [in Italy].' And at 6 P.M. Himmler telephoned Hewel at Hitler's HQ. 'Edda Ciano telephone [conversation] with Mussolini.' On Sep 20, after talking with Kaltenbrunner about Ciano family's behaviour,' Himmler jotted on his agenda for discussion with Hitler that evening, 'Journeys of Countess [Edda] Ciano: smashing up furniture.' On Edda's links with the OSS see Allen Dulles' papers, boxes 20, 21, 23, 43, 48, and 170 (Princeton University).

page 628 An account of Hitler's conference of Sep 30 was published in *Schweizer Illustrierte Zeitung* early in 1947.

page 628 The narrative of the air offensive is based on Milch's files, volumes 31, 39, 51, 53, 62, and 63; on Milch's secret speech to the gauleiters on Oct 6 (T175/119/5054 *et seq.*).; on Speer's notes on Führer conferences; on Hitler's war conference of Oct 4 and

his remarks to the Bulgarian regents on Oct 18, 1943.

page 630 The telegram from Consul Eitel Friedrich Moellhausen, Oct 6, 1943, is ND, NG–5027; Hitler's negation of the SS order is in Franz von Sonnleitner's teletype dated Oct 9, 1943. For the SS report on the roundup of Rome's Jews, Oct 17, see T175/53/7133.

page 630 At one stage in his speech of Oct 6, 1943 Himmler directly addressed himself to 'You, Herr Reichsminister,' which probably indicates that Speer was a listener (although he went to great pains at the end of his life to deny that he was present). Field Marshal Weichs frankly told interrogators of the US Seventh Army on May 30, 1945, that Himmler had once visited him in the Balkans and confirmed that the rumours were true – that the (unspecified) victims were loaded into trucks without knowing that a sudden, painless death awaited them. 'They are just criminals of whom we must rid ourselves,' was Himmler's explanation. Rear Admiral Engel described Himmler's speech also from memory in captivity on Apr 29, 1945 (PRO file WO. 208/4169, SRGG.1167).

page 632 The fragmentary record of Hitler's remarks – during the war conference of Oct 27, 1943 – was found by Lev Bezymenski in Moscow archives. Hitler had just had a long talk with Himmler, who had seen Schellenberg during the afternoon. Schellenberg's report on 'MacEvan' is in AA file serial 1755, pages 404620 *et seq*.

page 632 Rommel himself wrote to his wife on Oct 26, 1943: 'Anyway, he hasn't signed the order for the new job. . . Perhaps I didn't inspire much hope that the position could be held. Perhaps my hesitation – whether to take over the command – was cause enough' (T84/R275/0379). And Richthofen added his own gloss (diary, Oct 21): 'Apparently Rommel . . . made a bad impression during his report to Führer, from which he came back yesterday – doesn't surprise me.'

page 633 The case history of the Melitopol–Zaporozh'ye Line shows how justified Hitler's suspicions were. Kleist's Sixth Army had withdrawn to this line, which Manstein described as a 'well-built position,' but in *Verlorene Siege*, pages 537 *et seq*., Manstein himself admits that Kleist was thrown out of the line 'surprisingly rapidly' by the Red Army in October 1943. At the end of the year Hitler fulminated, 'That was the spirit then – Retreat! . . . Everybody lost their nerve, even Kleist. *Everybody*, *retreat*!' In the same war conference (Dec 28) he scoffed 'Nobody's going to maintain that this line here [forward of Melitopol] would have been tougher than that [the new line] or the entire front we have now [Dec 1943]. But now from here down we have to hold this whole line now; while then we only had this little bit to defend. Then we wouldn't be having our Crimea difficulties either.'

Over the months that followed, Hitler learned the truth. Luftwaffe General Karl Kitzinger, an expert on lines of fortification, had offered to take over the job in 1943. The army had indignantly refused, saying that only Manstein's army group could do it. 'The upshot was,' snarled Hitler on Jul 31, 1944 to Jodl, 'that nothing – nothing whatso-

ever – was done. Not one shovelful. The positions they claimed to have built from Melitopol to Zaporozh'ye were a pack of lies from start to finish. They told me downright lies. They cheated me. There was nothing' (see Heiber, page 605). Hitler's letter to Antonescu, Oct 25, 1943, is in the marshal's papers (ND, USSR-240).

page 634 Hitler's order to reconnoitre a *rear* line in France was cabled by Jodl to Rundstedt on Oct 31 (T78/317/1448); see too the OKW war diary and Hitler's conference with Jodl, Jul 31, 1944 (Heiber, page 594).

page 635 On the Balkan situation. Weichs's appreciation of Nov 1, 1943 is in naval staff war diary, annexes, Part C, xiv (PG/32217); I also used the OKW war diary, Weichs's private diary (N.19/3), and the files of the German envoy at Zagreb, Kasche (AA serial 1770), and interrogations of Dr. Hermann Neubacher, who later published an erudite history, *Sonderauftrag Südost 1940–45* (Göttingen, 1958).

page 637 For 'Cicero,' I relied on file AL/2656, AA files (serial 1553), and Steengracht's AA file on Turkey (serial 61). There are cautious references to his work in the naval staff diary (*e.g.*, Nov 12) and in Ribbentrop's discussions with Dobri Bozhiloff, the Bulgarian Prime Minister, and with Oshima; and in Goebbels's diary, Nov 13 and 20, 1943. As the summary in Jodl's diary, Feb 1944, shows, the authenticity of Cicero's documents was accepted at every level right up to Hitler.

page 637 On Hoth's dismissal: war diary of the chief of army personnel, Nov 3, 1943. On Jan 7, 1944, Hitler remarked to Keitel on the Army's poor political record. 'I hear hideous reports on this score. Worst of all, I don't mind saying, was Hoth's Army: in his generals' presence Hoth constantly criticised all the *Weltanschauung*-measures. This is why the Fourth Panzer Army has made the worst showing' (NS.6/162).

page 638 In Central Planning on Mar 1, 1944, Milch recalled: 'On Mar 5 [last year] I stated to the Führer that there was enough manpower in the army, air force, and navy for them to mobilise the necessary combat troops from within. In November the Führer ordered a census and found only 265,000 combat troops permanently at the eastern front. . . Remember, I had that job at Stalingrad [directing the airlift to the Sixth Army in January 1943]: at Taganrog [far to the rear] there were 65,000 army troops, while every kilometre at the front was being held by one lieutenant and six men, who would have been delighted to get twenty or thirty men to help them' (MD.48/9983 *et seq.*).

page 639 I used an investigation by US authorities of the underground Central Works factory in May 1945 (FD.3268/45), its production records (held in London), and the top secret mission reports of Colonel T. R. B. Sanders on the V-weapon sites in France, Feb 21, 1945; also a manuscript by Colonel Eugen Walter (MS B–689) of the 'Sixty-fifth Army Corps' and Milch's documents and Jodl's diary.

page 640 On the planning of the Luftwaffe's winter attack on London see Goebbels's diary, Dec 7, 1943; Koller's files (T321/90/0413 *et seq.*)., and the annexes to the OKL war diary on T321/10. Hitler is quoted from his war con-

ference on Jan 28, 1944.

page 641 The FO telegrams to Ankara are in PRO files, FO.371/37478–9.

page 642 Küchler's account of his meeting with Hitler is an annexe to the war diary of Army Group North (T311/79/2814 *et seq.*). See also Admiral Heinz Assmann's letter to the naval staff, Dec 29, 1943 (PG/31747), which I quote at length on pages 602–3.

page 643 There is a file on the *Scharnhorst*'s end in naval staff war diary annexes, Part C, ii. I also used the entries for Dec 2 and 23–28, 1943, and Jan 8, 1944, and Dönitz's conference with Commander in Chief Naval Group North (PG/31747).

page 644 A Colonel Lersner's record of Hitler's speech on Oct 16, 1943, is on microfilm T77/1039 2937 *et seq*. On Nazi indoctrination proposals, see the papers by Waldemar Besson, Gerhard L. Weinberg, and Volker Berghahn published in *VfZ* in 1961 (page 76), 1964 (page 443), and 1969 (page 17), respectively. General Schörner's correspondence is in British files (AL/2831).

page 644 See the stenogram of Reinecke's discussion with Hitler on Jan 7, 1944, in Party files (NS.6/162). I also used interrogations of Reinecke and Göring by OCMH.

page 645 Many sources on the Jan 4, 1944, conference exist: notes by Lammers (ND, 1292–PS) and a circular (T84/175/4886 *et seq.*).; by Sauckel, (1292–PS) and memo (T175/71/8037 *et seq.*).; by Speer, *Chronik*; references in Central Planning meetings on Feb 16 and Mar 1, 1944 (MD.48/10066 *et seq.*, and 9953 *et seq.*)., and the diaries of Milch and Himmler.

page 646 The letters of Edda Ciano *née* Mussolini letters are in AA files, serial 738, pages 267674 *et seq*.

page 646 Encouraged by Cicero's reports, Hitler began withdrawing forces from the Balkans in December: see Jodl diary for Dec 23, 28, and 29, 1943, and Feb 10 (?), 1944.

page 647 Hitler's Jan 27, 1944, speech is in the BA Schumacher collection, file 365. It is referred to in the diaries of the naval staff, Jodl, Weichs (Mar 3, 1944), and Salmuth (Mar 27, 1946), and of the chief of army personnel (Schmundt). 'Field Marshal von Manstein made an interruption. In connection with this interruption and the various tensions of late the question of retiring Field Marshal Manstein is again debated.' For eye-witness depictions by generals Rothkirch and Veith see SRGG.1135 and SRGG.1149 in PRO file WO.208/4169 169.

page 648 Bormann's record of Hitler's remarks on Jan 27–28, 1944, is on IfZ microfilm MA–340.

page 649 Walter Schellenberg, who saw Hitler that spring, wrote in his manuscript memoirs: 'His eyes – once the dominating feature of his face – were now tired and lacklustre; his left arm shook so strongly that he almost constantly had to clutch it with his right hand.'

page 650 Dr. Werner Best quoted Hitler's remark of Dec 30, 1943 in his manuscript (ZS.207/1).

page 651 Salmuth was to write (on Mar 18, 1946), 'Whether Rommel was really a great commander in the European theatre – as opposed to the African – I will not comment.' Salmuth was irritated by Rommel's 'unpleasant manner' of shouting at officers and men alike

on these inspection tours, and by his 'highly superficial and abrupt tone.'

page 651 Rommel reported in detail on his anti-invasion measures on Apr 22, 1944 (AL/510/1/4).

page 652 Telegrams from Istanbul, Ankara, and Sofia relating to the defection of Vermehren are in Steengracht's AA files, serial 61, pages 41960 *et seq*. The rest of the story, resulting in Canaris's dismissal, is built up from the naval staff war diary, Feb 19 and 22, and Mar 2, 4, and 7; Himmler's diary, Feb 9 and 11; a memo by Wagner, Jul 1, 1944 (Bobrick's papers, serial 738, pages 267624 *et seq*.); Hitler's order of Feb 12 (file H3/1539); and Walther Huppenkothen's 1945 manuscript (BDC files). Canaris was appointed 'Chief of the Special Staff for Economic Warfare and Measures' as of Jul 1, according to the naval staff war diary, Jul 10; twelve days later he was arrested for high treason.

page 653 On the operations of the turncoat German officers in the Cherkassy pocket: CSDIC interrogation of Lieutenant General Kruse; and the diaries of the chief of army personnel and of Weichs, Mar 3, 1944, and of Ulrich von Hassell, Feb 23. The Yivo Institute, New York, has extensive files of the propaganda output of the Free German Movement and the League of German Officers (Occ E FD).

page 654 Professor W. Löhlein's record of his examination of Hitler's eyes on Mar 2, 1944, is in American files (OI.CIR/4); I also used Dr. Erwin Giesing's manuscript.

page 656 Count Gerd von Schwerin wrote a note on his personal impressions of Hitler while at Nuremberg on Nov 12, 1945.

page 656 Schellenberg recorded his talk with Ribbentrop in his manuscript (IfZ).

page 657 The preparations for the occupation of Hungary are described from the diaries of Jodl, Weichs, and the OKW; and OKW files (T77/791) and Steengracht's file on Hungary, serial 99.

page 658 Hitler's confrontation with Horthy: Assmann's report to the naval staff (war diary, Mar 19, 1944); Jodl's diary, Mar 18; Horthy's account, Mar 19 (in the Horthy papers); the OKH attaché section's 'Report on the Journey with [Hungarian] General Homlok to Salzburg from Mar 17 to 20, 1944' (T78/451/6889 *et seq*.).; Hitler asked Horthy to agree in writing that the German troops which would invade on Mar 19 were doing so 'at his request'; Horthy refused. I also used post-war interrogations of Horthy, Ribbentrop, Carl Rekowski, Edmund Veesenmayer, and General Greiffenberg; and Zeitzler's manuscript (N.63, IfZ).

page 659 Jodl also took a lengthy note of Hitler's Mar 28, 1944, conference.

page 659 General Alexander von Falkenhausen observed Rommel's optimism when the field marshal visited him early in March 1944 in Brussels, 'Our views on the political and military situation could not have been more divergent. But when I repaid the visit on Jun 1, 1944, at La Roche-Guyon [Rommel's HQ] he had changed and wholeheartedly adopted my view' (US Army, MS B–289).

page 661 On the proposed execution of Allied airmen, see the OKW file on film T77/778; Hewel's memos of Mar 24, 1944 (NG–4059); Milch's diary, Feb 23–24, 1946; Bormann's circular of

May 15, 1944 (BDC file 182); and a memo by Ribbentrop's bureau, Jul 17, 1944 (Ritter's files, serial 6530).

page 662 Below and Günsche told me of Hitler's affection for Manstein. I also used Backe's letter to Manstein of Oct 17, 1944, and Hitler's remarks in the war conference on Mar 2, 1945: 'Manstein has in my eyes the greatest talent for operational strategy.'

page 663 Gauleiter Frauenfeld's study on the administration of the occupied east, dated Feb 10, 1944, is in Himmler's files (T175/125/0419 *et seq*.).

page 663 For Hitler's military policies in southern Russia, see his conversation with the Romanian General Garbea on Mar 29, 1944 (T78/366/8829 *et seq*.).

page 663 Saur repeated Hitler's remarks to the Fighter Staff on Apr 8 (MD.5/2388 *et seq*.).; I also use Göring's version of the Führer's conference with Dönitz on Apr 13 (MD.64/6480 *et seq*.).

page 664 In addition to the better known materials on the evacuation of the Crimea – like the OKW war diaries, and papers by Baron von Wietershausen and by H. D. von Conrady in *WR* in 1954 (pages 209 *et seq*., and 327 *et seq*.). and in 1961 (pages 312 *et seq*., respectively) – I used the naval staff war diary and the diaries of the army liaison officer to Dönitz (T608/1/529 *et seq*.). and the army's special evacuation staff under General Lindemann (T78/269/7187 *et seq*.).; further documents from the naval side will be found in OKW files (T77/778) and in Schörner's papers (AL/2831/2).

page 666 Jaenecke wrote to Hitler the next day, Apr 30, 1944: 'At yesterday's conference there were one or two points I unfortunately omitted to make. . .' (AL/2831/3).

page 667 German Intelligence had obtained Eisenhower's still-secret Proclamation to the French People, announcing the disembarkation in France; see the naval staff war diary, Apr 13, 1944, and file PG/33399.

page 669 According to Army Group B's war diary, on May 1 and 6 Hitler again stressed his belief that the invasion would strike Normandy and Cherbourg and demanded close scrutiny of the readiness of General Erich Marcks's Eighty-Fourth Corps, defending that sector; Rundstedt's war diary records that Jodl telephoned on May 9 that the Führer expected that the main effort would be against Normandy, followed by a subsidiary push into Brittany. On May 27, Hitler repeated this to the Japanese ambassador, Oshima; anything other than the invasions of Brittany and Normandy would be 'just diversions.'

page 670 The final report of Admiral, Black Sea, is in naval staff war diary annexes, Part C, xiv.

page 671 Koller's studies on the shrinking Luftwaffe bomber force are in his private papers (in my collection) and in OKL war diary annexes (T321/1) and Milch's papers (MD.53/706 *et seq*.). What follows is also based on Göring's conferences (MD.64) and on a memo in Bormann's files on the Me-262 jet (NS-6/152).

page 673 Ribbentrop cabled to Veesenmayer on Jul 16 that Horthy had stopped the transports of Jews; he protested that this was a departure from 'the measures agreed on at Klessheim' (AA serial K789). Himmler's views are evident from his hand-written speech notes, *e.g.*, for his speech to field com-

manders at Posen on Jan 26, 1944. 'Jewish question. The Generalgouvernement [Poland] much calmed down since Jewish problem solved. – Radical struggle. –Total solution. – Don't let avengers arise to take revenge on our children' (T175/94/4835 *et seq.*). His May 5 speech is on microfilm t175/92/3475 *et seq.*, and that of May 24, t175/94/4609 *et seq.* That Himmler talked only of 'expulsion' of Jews (*Aussiedlung*) to Hitler is clear from his hand-written agenda of Jul (and Aug) 1944 (*ibid.*, page 5065).

page 673 Hitler's speech is recorded in Himmler's files (*ibid.*, 4972 *et seq.*). He used similar language to Sztójay on Jun 7, 1944.

page 674 Korten's optimism (MD.64/6998), and Speer's in Central Planning the next day (MD.55/2170), are echoed in a letter written by Backe on May 17: 'Apparently the invasion's got to be taken seriously after all. I won't believe it until they are actually ashore. . . Our generals are very optimistic, without exception. . . Immense preparations have been made on our side. I am not particularly worried about it. Here everybody is longing for it to start' (Backe's private papers).

page 675 On Cramer's English captivity see Hitler's remarks on Aug 31 (Heiber, page 611). Cramer's own version in Werner Beumelburg's diary, Jul 24 (in my collection, IfZ) and to the Gestapo (NA film T84/20); the conversations between British officers and General von Knobelsdorff, May 7, 1945 (X-P.3) and von Falkenhausen, Aug 14, 1945 (GRGG.346).

page 677 The SD's warning that the BBC invasion-alerts had been monitored was forwarded by Kaltenbrunner to the OKW on Jun 1; thence to Foreign Armies West on Jun 2 at 6:50 P.M (T78/451/6880 *et seq.*). Under Nuremberg interrogation, Walter Schellenberg blamed the military for failing to appreciate the significance of this scoop. On the eve of the invasion – Jun 5, 1944 – Rommel's Chief of Staff, General Hans Speidel, dismissed the invasion-alerts monitored since Jun 1 as 'not providing any evidence of an imminent invasion' (Army Group B, weekly report, T311/3/2156 *et seq.*). See also the war diaries of the Fifteenth Army. Note that the war diary of Commander in Chief, West was retrospectively written up – one forms a different impression altogether of the army's readiness from the naval staff diary of Jun 11, 1944. The admiralty was certainly alerted on Jun 2 (see file PG/33399).

page 677 Not only had Dönitz gone on leave – see the naval staff diary of Jun 6, 1944, and his interrogation on Aug 6, 1945 – but Salmuth (Fifteenth Army) had departed on a two-day hunting party, and Rommel had returned briefly to Germany to celebrate his wife's birthday on Jun 6: see my Rommel biography, *The Trail of the Fox* (London and New York, 1977).

page 681 I have pieced together events at the Berghof during the night of the invasion from statements of Hitler's adjutants, of Goebbels, Keitel, Jodl, Sonnleitner, and Zeitzler, and from the diaries of Joseph Goebbels, the naval staff, Commander in Chief West, and the OKW. Hitler probably stayed awake until 3 A.M. (Milch diary, May 7, 1947, quoting Speer). Twenty minutes earlier (according to the naval staff diary) the

'Admiral, Channel Coast' had telephoned the OKW. 'Advance report: from 2 A.M. onward, large numbers of paratroops and gliders, east coast Cotentin peninsula and east of Trouville.' Not until 3:45 A.M. was this enlarged upon. By 5:45 A.M. Naval Group West, in Paris, believed the invasion had begun – but neither Rundstedt's staff nor the OKW shared this conviction. At 7:30 A.M. Naval Group West convincingly reported, 'Invasion area extends from Saint-Vaast to Deauville, main efforts evidently Quistreham and Saint-Vaast. North of Barfleur major invasion force heading south. Cargo ships with the invasion forces.' At 8:15 A.M. this was forwarded to Jodl's staff at Berchtesgaden. For 'The War in the West,' see the 117-page study by Wilhelm Scheidt, deputy chief OKW historian, in NA, RG.407, entry 427, box 1954G. At 9:30 A.M. Reuters officially confirmed that the invasion had begun.

page 682 The naval staff analysed all the Abwehr agents' reports on the coming invasion. Of the 173 received prior to Jun 6, 1944, only 8 percent had been right: 14 percent had been partially correct; the rest worthless (diary, Mar 23, 1945). What is a significant indictment of German army Intelligence methods is the treatment of the Operational Plan of the US Fifth Corps – *i.e.*, of the entire American sector in Normandy: this fell into the hands of the German 351st Infantry Division on Jun 7, 1944, and can thereafter be traced up to the Eighty-fourth Corps (General Marcks) and Seventh Army, which forwarded it to Rommel's HQ on Jun 11. Blumentritt – Rundstedt's Chief of Staff – stated in manuscript B-637 the 'belief' that he sent it up by courier on Jun 12 to the OKW. Had this document ever reached Hitler it would have left no doubt that Normandy was *the* main invasion area. It having been seized from the corpse of an American officer killed in a gunfight, an enemy trick could probably be ruled out.

page 682 Salmuth's Mar 1946 manuscript on the invasion is in his private papers. Not until 9:12 A.M. on Jun 6 did the German naval commandant in Normandy forward to the naval staff the pregnant signal from the gun battery at Marcouf: 'Very many landing craft are approaching under cover of battleships and cruisers.'

page 683 The persistent optimism of the Germans is evident in Goebbels's diary. Hitler's personal adjutant, Alwin-Broder Albrecht, also wrote on Jun 9: 'Anyway, everybody here's breathing a sigh of relief.' Hitler told Sztójay that they had been looking forward to the invasion. And the naval staff recorded on Jun 7: 'The Führer and Field Marshal Rommel view the situation positively and confidently, in anticipation of the success of our countermeasures.' These included the laying of the top-secret German 'pressure mine' which Hitler authorised that day.

page 684 The war diary of Colonel Max Wachtel's 'Anti-aircraft Regiment 155(W)' – the V-1 flying-bomb launchers – has survived intact.

page 685 Schramm's account of Hitler's visit to Soissons on Jun 17, 1944 (OKW war diary, iv, pages 316 *et seq.*). is unreliable. My account depends on Koller's papers, on Assmann's description (naval staff diary), on Jodl's diary, on signals in the war diaries of Rund-

stedt and Army Group B (T84/281), and on the actual narrative of the conference in the appendices to Army Group B's war diary (T311/278). See too the interrogation of Koller's cypher clerk, SIR.1185.

page 686 Rommel's exuberance is clear from a diary entry of Admiral Friedrich Ruge, and from Rommel's own weekly report of Jun 19: 'Despite the enemy's vast superiority in air power and ships' artillery and ruthless expenditure of troops and equipment in repeated heavy attacks, they have gained no successes, but actually lost ground at Caumont. . . Captured documents show that the enemy has reached not one of his far-flung objectives. . . In the fighting so far the enemy has lost over five hundred tanks and over one thousand planes. . . The population of the combat area is friendly toward us; there has been a perceptible decrease in the sabotage and other resistance activity that sprang up in the first post-invasion days' (Army Group B, war diary, annexes).

page 686 In August 1944 Hermann Gackenholz wrote a full report on the disastrous collapse of Army Group Centre for its war diary; the war diary itself is in OCMH files. Gackenholz kept the report and published it in *VfZ*, 1955, pages 317 *et seq.* The faulty appreciations of Stalin's intentions by Gehlen's branch of the General Staff can be followed in this, in the naval staff war diary, and above all in Koller's daily reports.

page 687 General Student described on Sep 22, 1945 to fellow generals how two days before the Russian offensive 'Zeitzler explained his reasons for expecting the main enemy effort to come in the south. Hitler thought otherwise and at the last moment ordered reserves sent to Army Group Centre' (General Kurt Dittmar, diary).

page 688 Himmler's speech of Jun 21, 1944, is on microfilm T175/93/3950 *et seq.*; Hitler's of the next day is on microfilm T580/871.

page 689 Hitler later learned from Allied press reports that General von Schlieben's surrender had been somewhat inglorious. 'A braggart,' Hitler complained to Jodl on Jul 21. 'He issues a defiant proclamation . . . and then waits for [the Americans] to arrive, whereupon he immediately runs up a white flag.'

page 690 Even if Hitler had authorised the withdrawal of Army Group North, its divisions could not have reached the crisis area of Army Group Centre in less than four weeks (see Hitler's conference with Dönitz, Jul 9, 1944).

page 690 Zeitzler described his last row with Hitler in various post-war manuscripts (N.63/ 1, /80, and /96); his adjutant Günther Smend described it to the Gestapo on Aug 1, 1944 (T84/ 22/4535 *et seq.*). By Jul 1 he was – according to Gackenholz's report – already 'off sick.' Morell's assistant Dr. Richard Weber tells me that he himself issued the medical certificate to Zeitzler.

page 691 The quotations are from the war diary of Anti-aircraft Regiment 155(W). See too Rommel's appreciation, dated Jun 26, 1944, on the internal situation in France. 'The population affected continues to be embittered by the Allies' ruthless mode of warfare, especially by their use of air power,

while otherwise the population is reserved. Combat operations by the new weapon [V-1] against England evoked interest and in some parts satisfaction.' For Rommel's conference with Hitler on Jun 29, see the note taken by his adjutant (Appendix to Army Group B war diary (T311/278), the note on his talk with Geyr on Jul 1 (T313/420/3789), and the Nuremberg interrogation of Keitel on Sep 28, 1945.

page 691 Koller's formal record of Hitler's remarks on Jun 29, 1944, is in his papers; he also jotted down a shorthand record of both these and Göring's subsequent outbursts about 'the cowardly fighter pilots.'

page 693 Again I quote Koller's lengthy record; explicit accounts of Hitler's speech are to be found in both Jodl's diary and the naval staff war diary of Jul 3, 1944.

page 694 Koller noted Hitler's question to Heusinger; his later reminiscence is quoted from his conference with generals Siegfried Westphal and Hans Krebs on Aug 31, 1944 (Heiber, page 615). He had said the same to Antonescu on Aug 5.

page 694 General Vinzenz Müller's order of Jul 8, 1944, will be found on microfilm T77/1038/0780 *et seq.*, together with other similar documents emanating from the renegades. See also the war diary of the chief of army personnel, Jul 27.

page 695 This war diary (see note for page 694, above) together with Koller's, Speer's, Thomale's, and Himmler's papers, was used to trace the origins of the fifteen 'blocking divisions' (*Sperrverbände*) – out of which the *Volksgrenadier* divisions were born.

page 695 With the exception of Peter Hoffmann, no historian noticed that Hitler undertook this lightning one-day visit back to the Wolf's Lair in Rastenburg on Jul 9, 1944. From the records of Jodl, Dönitz, and Koller there can, however, be no doubt. It is also referred to by Major General Peter von Groeben in his study 'The Collapse of Army Group Centre' (US army manuscripts, T–31). It was here too – as Himmler wrote to Rosenberg on Jul 14 – that Hitler ordered every available man in Estonia to be recruited into the SS (T175/125/0532). Koch's telegram was reported by Koller's cypher clerk (SIR.1185).

page 696 According to the stenographer's diary, Hitler's Jul 13, 1944, secret speech lasted from 10:22 to 11:40 P.M. Eighteen days later, his health shattered by the bomb attempt, Hitler admitted to Jodl: 'I can stand up and even speak for a certain length of time, but then I suddenly have to sit down again. . . Nor would I trust myself to make a speech like that one recently on the Obersalzberg, because I might suddenly collapse' (Heiber, page 608). Its content was evidently the familiar litany. On Apr 11, 1945, General Fellgiebel's adjutant told British interrogation officers that General Stieff – 'chief of the OKH organisation branch – had muttered, "If I hear that phonograph record played once more I'll go crazy"' – to which Fellgiebel, a fellow-conspirator, replied with heavy irony, 'Well, Stieff, that was the last time.'

page 697 On the implementation of total war, see Lammers's letter to Keitel, Jul 17, 1944, and subsequent correspondence (T175/71/7972 *et seq.*).

Goebbels's letter survives in his papers in the BA, file NL. 118/107, and on the Moscow microfiches, and in French translation on T84/272. Peter Longerich is incorrect to call this 'an unknown memorandum' ('Joseph Goebbels und der totale Krieg,' *VfZ*, 1987, 289ff); I quoted from it already in the first edition of this work in 1975.

page 698 Stauffenberg returned from Hitler's HQ on Jul 11 or 15, 1944, and exclaimed that the whole HQ ought to be blown sky high; Colonel Georg Hansen – Canaris's successor and a fellow-conspirator – 'attributed this exclamation to Stauffenberg's very powerful irritation that the fifteen new divisions being raised were to be subordinated to the Reichsführer SS [Himmler]' (Gestapo interrogation of Hansen, Jul 29, 1944, T84/19/0257).

page 699 See the interrogation of Christa Schroeder at Berchtesgaden, May 22, 1945.

page 699 See the brief record of Hitler's speech to Nazi indoctrination officers on Jul 29, 1944 (T78/80/0603 *et seq.*).; Jodl's speech of Jul 24 (T77/1432), and Himmler's speech of Aug 3, 1944, about Fellgiebel's defeatist utterances.

page 700 These first withdrawals from the idle Fifteenth Army are referred to in the diaries of the OKW, Kluge's staff, and the naval staff, Jul 20, 1944; their strategic importance is underlined in Jodl's diary.

page 701 Percy Schramm wrote several annexes to the OKW war diary on the Jul 20, 1944, bomb incident; they are on T77/1432/0620 *et seq.* I used stenographer Thöt's diary, the version in Schmundt's official diary, and Peter Hoffmann's study in *VfZ*, 1964, pages 254 *et seq.*, and his *Widerstand*, *Staatsstreich*, *Attentat* (Munich, 1969), chap. xi. In addition I assembled a voluminous collection of statements and interrogations of the officers present in the hut, largely from secret British files (IfZ).

page 701 Hitler related his personal impressions on Aug 15, 1944, to Siegfried Kasche (AA serial 1770, pages 405808 *et seq.*).; to stenographer Ludwig Krieger; to his ENT specialist Erwin Giesing; and to the gauleiters on Aug 4. The wife of Herbert Backe wrote on Aug 7, 1944: 'Herbert came straight from the Führer conference. At lunch he was only three places away from the Führer. Gauleiter Giesler [of Munich] asked the Führer, "What did you feel at the moment of the blast?" The Führer said, "I thought I had heard three detonations and suspected hand grenades had been tossed in from outside. The generals jumped out of the windows. But I thought I would then be running right into the killers' arms. I went out through the door, putting out the flames in my hair. . ."'

page 704 Keitel's alacrity is evident. The Berlin conspirators had begun issuing their 'Valkyrie' signals a few minutes before 4 P.M. – forging Fromm's signature and making reference to Witzleben and Hoepner. Just *fifteen* minutes later Keitel was already issuing the first teletypes from Hitler's HQ countermanding these spurious signals. By 4:05 P.M. the OKH General Staff already had evidence that Stauffenberg had failed, for staff at Zossen monitored a telephone conversation between Hermann Fegelein (Himmler's liaison officer at Hitler's HQ) and SS General Hans

Jüttner on the explosion's failure – it had been 'similar to Munich [in November 1939], but Führer safe and well.'

page 704 Himmler emphasised the delicacy of his role in speeches on Jul 21 and 26, 1944 (T175/93/3904 and 4146). See also Keitel's memoirs, page 222.

page 704 Eduard Wagner's role is an enigma. He wrote on Jul 21 to Zeitzler: 'I swear to you on my word of honour that I had nothing to do with the events of Jul 20,' and he enclosed a full account of the events at Zossen as he remembered them (IfZ file, ED-95).

page 705 A complete sequence of the key Jul 20, 1944, telegrams was captured by British Intelligence in the files of the Nazi Party office in Schleswig-Holstein. This particular one omitted the first sentence: 'The Führer Adolf Hitler is dead.' But it is included in the later versions – *e.g.*, in naval staff war diary, 8:05 P.M.; Kluge's Paris staff received by teletype at 8:10 P.M. an assurance that the 6:28 P.M. radio broadcast (page 706) was a lie and that the Führer *was* dead and that all steps were to be taken as swiftly as possible.

page 706 I used Schaub's unpublished manuscript, and a private letter by the adjutant Albrecht dated Jul 22, 1944.

page 706 Inexplicably, Goebbels's diary entries for the period Jul 19–22 are missing – either never dictated, or perhaps even guiltily destroyed. See however the report by Dr. Hans Hagen on his visit to Goebbels (T84/19/0022 *et seq.*). The propaganda minister had a direct telephone line to Hitler, unknown to the plotters (OCMH interrogation of General Wilhelm Arnold, OKH signals chief, Aug 25, 1945). On the Jul 20 events in Goebbels's ministry, see Major Balzer's report (T84/169/6614 *et seq.*).; and Eugen Hadamovsky's report in Goebbels's Potsdam files (Potsdam archives, ZStA, Rep. 62 Re 3; now re-archived in the BA).

page 706 On Hitler's injuries I used Morell's diary and dossier on his patient Hitler (see note to page 426) and the testimonies of Morell, Hasselbach, Brandt, and Giesing.

page 706 The interpreter Dollmann gives a spirited account of Hitler's conversation with Mussolini, Göring, and Ribbentrop on Jul 22, 1945 (CSDIC/CMF/ X194).

page 708 The engineer General Werner Kennes – Fromm's armaments expert – had slipped out of the Bendler Strasse building at midnight. Generals Hoepner and Karl Freiherr von Thüngen were also witnesses to Stauffenberg's bland assurance that he had seen Hitler's corpse; so was another – anonymous – officer, of whose testimony before the People's Court only the sound recording survives.

page 709 Rommel's 'Observations on the Situation,' dated Jul 15, 1944, are in Army Group B's war diary annexes (T311/3/2241 *et seq.*).; Kluge forwarded the document with a letter to Hitler dated Jul 21 (*ibid.*)

page 709 The quote is from Hitler's talk with Jodl on Jul 31, 1944 (Heiber).

page 711 Eicken's treatment notes on Hitler survive (NA film, ML/125 and / 131). He was also interrogated by the British.

page 711 At Christmas 1944 Himmler told Puttkamer: 'If only we'd known the scale right from the start, we'd have proceeded quite differently; we'd have

differentiated more – we wouldn't have hanged people just because they had heard talk of something.'

page 712 Helmuth Maurer – Canaris's pianist neighbour, who wrote a long manuscript on the Abwehr chief – had been with him on the afternoon of Jul 20, 1944. About 3 P.M. Stauffenberg telephoned that the Führer was dead. Canaris knew his phone was tapped and responded, 'Was it the Russians?' Upon his arrest, Canaris's most recent diary was immediately found, but that was not incriminating.

page 712 Helldorff's involvement was reported to the OSS as early as the first week of July. The plotters several times asked the OSS for assistance: see the Berne OSS agency's reports to Washington in FDRL, PSF box 168; and the Donovan papers at USAMHI.

page 713 General Hermann Reinicke described the Berliners' indignation under OCMH interrogation in July 1945. The diary of Weichs mirrors the fury of the non-implicated officers. '*July 21*. Putsch. Frightful situation – this internal unrest too. Success would have resulted in chaos. Madness to think a rapid peace can be achieved by such means. A stab in the back like 1918, but worse as it comes from a quarter from which one might have expected the opposite. Horrifying, the names that participated in this revolt. How will the army sit out this terrible upheaval, now that its officers and generals will forfeit every shred of confidence in them? How will our allies take this blow?' And on *July 22*: '. . . even if the assassination had succeeded, the putsch would still have collapsed, as not one soldier would have accepted orders from these leaders.'

page 713 A collection of mail sent to Hitler after the plot is in Goebbels's files (BA, R55DC/145).

page 714 Rommel had warned Hitler of the bazooka shortage at his mid-Mar 1944 conference; the Seventh Army needed 5,190 but had only 644; the Fifteenth Army needed 6,228 but had only 781 (war diary, Army Group B, quartermaster, annexes). Wagner in fact shared responsibility with Kluge's quartermaster, Colonel Eberhard Finkh – who was one of the conspirators and was sentenced to death on Aug 30, 1944. According to the naval staff diary, Aug 9, the OKW noted: 'Commander in Chief West keeps reporting shortages of specific types, particularly armour piercing ammunition and bazookas.' Historians dissatisfied with Schramm's summary treatment of the war's theatres in the OKW war diary will find excellent daily reports on Hitler's war conferences from Aug 1944 to Jan 1945 (PG/32122b); and from Dec 1944 to Apr 7, 1945 (PG/31742).

page 716 A memo on Stauffenberg's telephone call to Army Group North at 7:55 P.M., Jul 20, is in German army files (T78/352/2592); Beck himself then took the phone, declaring, 'To let yourselves be shut in – just as at Stalingrad – that is no way to lead an army!'

page 717 In addition to the German record of Hitler's meeting with Antonescu there exists the marshal's own account, published on Jan 15, 1953, in *La Nation Roumaine* in Paris. I also used Guderian's manuscript (ZS.57), the army conferences with General Garbea (T78/366/8704 *et seq.*)., and – with caution – Professor Andreas Hillgru-

ber's study in *WR*, 1957, pages 377 *et seq.*: Hillgruber relies heavily on Erik Hansen as a source. Hitler's warning was witnessed by his adjutant Colonel Erik von Amsberg, whom I interviewed in 1971; and Hitler himself later referred to it, according to Wolf Junge's manuscript .

page 718 The diarist was Herbert Backe's wife. I also used the account written by deputy press chief Dr. Helmut Sündermann.

page 718 See Jodl's diary, Aug 1, 1944. '5 P.M.: Führer tells me to read Kaltenbrunner's report [dated Jul 30] on the testimony of Lieutenant Colonel Hofacker about discussions with K[luge] and R[ommel]. Führer is looking for a new Commander in Chief, West. Plans to question R[ommel] after he's better and then to retire him without further ado.' Kluge appears to have remained on the sidelines as an interested observer of the conspiracy and little more. At an emergency conference late on Jul 20 with Stülpnagel, Hofacker, and Blumentritt he had dissociated himself from the deed, but he noticeably failed to report these meetings to the Gestapo. Salmuth wrote: 'It became clear to me that Kluge had known what was planned on Jul 20 when I paid a visit to him the next day, because when I asked him for his view he only answered, "Well, it didn't work out!" and these few words told me enough.'

page 720 On the attempts by Hitler and Jodl to prevent Kluge launching the Avranches counter-attack prematurely, see the war diary of Commander in Chief, West, annexes. That the panzer divisions were unready is clear from the telephone log of the Seventh Army (AL/528/1).

page 721 General Werner Kreipe's diary (transcribed by the Americans as MS P-069) and Koller's papers provide extensive information on Hitler and the Luftwaffe at this stage.

page 722 Of 192 agents' reports, only fifteen accurately predicted the Allied invasion of southern France. See the naval staff war diary, Aug 8, 10, 13, and 15, 1944; and its annexe, 'Investigation of the Value of RSHA Intelligence on Enemy Invasion Plans,' Oct 16, 1944 (PG/32218).

page 722 Blumentritt stated under British interrogation that Keitel had told him of the intercepted enemy signal to Kluge. Guderian said much the same to Milch (diary, Oct 28, 1945). Salmuth also heard of this story from Gauleiter Greiser in January 1945 – but dismissed it as 'a rumour probably spread by the Party.' I also used a conversation between General Eberbach and Blumentritt on Aug 19, 1945, recorded by CSDIC; the diary of the chief of army personnel; and Blumentritt's letters to Jodl (AL/1720) and Burgdorf (X–967).

page 724 On the arrest of Cramer, see Schmundt's diary, Aug 2, 9, 14, and 24; the MS by Dr. Georg Kiessel of the Gestapo, Aug 6, 1946, in my collection (IfZ); the interrogation of one of Bayerlein's staff, Jul 28, 1944 (SIR.861); and the sources to page 675.

page 724 Jodl recorded Hitler's meeting of Aug 19, 1944 in his diary; Buhle – also present – told the OKH artillery branch of Hitler's intention to raise fourteen new artillery brigades on Aug 24: 'By these means a concentration of one thousand guns is to be achieved for

a decisive job in the west.' And, 'The armament of the twenty-five divisions demanded is to be German' (T78/269/7521 *et seq.*).

page 724 Martin Bormann's file on 'Luftwaffe Scandals' is in the BA Schumacher collection file 315.

page 725 According to the manuscript of Abwehr colonel Friedrich-Wilhelm Heinz on 'Canaris and Nicolai' (NA film ML/690), a trusted crony of Canaris's on Choltitz's staff persuaded the general to turn over Paris intact to the enemy. Hitler's order to the contrary is in the annexes both of Army Group B's and Commander in Chief West's war diaries. For Choltitz's own narrative, see CSDIC report D11/55(GG) in NA, RG.165, entry 79, box 764.

page 726 Hitler's startling – but short-lived – project for a canal is reported by Admiral Voss in the naval staff war diary.

page 726 My narrative of Antonescu's overthrow – and Hitler's attempted countermeasures – relies on the naval staff diary (which is preferable to the OKW war diary here); General Hans Friessner's memoirs, *Verratene Schlachten* (Hamburg, 1956); and a report by the Fourth Air Force on events in Romania in 1944, dated Feb 11, 1945.

page 727 Hitler's immediate decision to abandon Greece is recorded in Weichs's private diary, Aug 23–24, 1944. The formal OKW directive followed on Aug 26; see also OKW war diary, iv, page 681.

page 729 Hitler's rebuke to Freisler is confirmed by Schaub's unpublished manuscript, by interviews of Heinz Lorenz and Otto Günsche in 1967, and by a US Seventh Army interrogation of Dr. Immanuel Schäffer of the propaganda ministry in June 1945. British files contain an account by one of the guards at Plötzensee, describing the hangings; Helldorff's grim treatment is described by the Gestapo official Dr. Georg Kiessel in his account of 'The Plot of Jul 20, 1944, and its Origins,' Aug 6, 1946 (British files), and by SS Captain Otto Prochnow under CSDIC interrogation, Mar 1946. The rest is based on Himmler's letters to Thierack, Nov 7, 1944 (BDC, SS-4465), and to Lammers and SS General Franz Breithaupt, Aug 27, 1944 (BDC file 242). British files list 81 such executions at Plötzensee prison after Jul 20, 1944; a separate list of 130 names also exists. Kiessel puts the final figure at 140. There is no support for the figure of '4,890' put about by the Allies in 1945, nor for the *New Statesman*'s 'official estimate' of 'over twenty thousand executed.'

page 730 The original page in Bormann's handwriting is in OCMH files, Washington (X-967). Kluge's pencilled letter to Hitler is in London files (MI.14/7). The version published in the OKW war diary, iv, pages 1574 *et seq.*, is only a retranslation from the English.

page 730 On the Kluge mystery, see the memo by Colonel Hugh M. Cole, historical officer attached to the US Third Army, in OCMH file X-967 (and *Time* magazine, Jun 25, 1945). According to the CSDIC interrogation of Blumentritt, Kluge's first reaction to the spurious word of Hitler's death on Jul 20, 1944, had been: 'If the Führer's dead, we ought to get in touch with the people on the other side right away.' So the idea was not anathema to him. And note his curious words on the telephone

to Blumentritt at 11:55 a.m. on Aug 16, after his return from his 'vanishing act' the day before: 'I'm now "back from abroad" again' (war diary, Commander in Chief West, annexe 1450).

page 731 Ribbentrop's description of his peace proposal is partially confirmed by an entry in Kreipe's diary on Sep 13, 1944: he asked Göring whether it was not time for the Reichsmarschall to make a political intervention. This question 'was answered with bitter criticism of Ribbentrop – he [Göring] was the last person who should now make the Führer feel uncertain.'

page 732 Weichs's telegram to Hitler's HQ, and the reply, are in Ritter's AA files, serial 1487, pages 368686 *et seq.*; the field marshal also referred to this after the war (n.19/12), as did Hermann Neubacher – under US State Department interrogation – who stated that the British local commander, General Sir R. M. Scobie, had contacted both him and the German Commander in Chief, Northern Greece, General Hubert Lanz. Ribbentrop confirmed the 'bait' strategy in a conversation with the Belgian Leon Degrelle on Dec 8, 1944 (AA serial B 16); see also naval staff diary, Sep 6 and 14, and Jodl's diary, Sep 14, and directive to Weichs (AA serial 1487); and OKW war diary, iv, page 719.

page 732 Two Japanese admiralty officers informed the German naval attaché of Stalin's alleged views on Aug 25; Ambassador Heinrich Georg Stahmer's telegram from Tokyo reporting this reached Ribbentrop's train on Aug 26 (AA, Ritter's files, serial 1436, page 363344). Most probably this was connected with the recent return of the Soviet ambassador Jakob Malik to Tokyo from Moscow. A few days later the Japanese foreign minister, Mamoru Shigemitsu, visited Stahmer in the same connection. Finally, on Sep 4, Ambassador Oshima came from Berlin to the Wolf's Lair to put the same proposals directly to Hitler. (Ribbentrop's report on this talk to Stahmer two days later is in Ritter's file, serial 1436). Hitler however painted an optimistic picture of Germany's strategic position – a coming counter-offensive with fresh divisions, new fighter aircraft, new submarine types, and adequate raw materials for two years – and emphasised that there was so far no sign that Stalin wanted peace. Hitler asked the Japanese to refrain from any steps. On this episode see also naval staff war diary, Sep 5, 1944, and Speer's testimony at Nuremberg, xvi, page 533. That Guderian shared Hitler's view was reported by his liaison officer to the naval staff (diary, Sep 17).

page 732 Speer's prognosis on the nickel supply was also inconsistent. On Sep 13, 1944, the naval staff noted his announcement that the Petsamo nickel supply was no longer of great importance to Germany's arms industry – a view the naval staff diary strongly disputed five days later.

page 735 See Keitel's signal to General Hans-Karl von Scheele on Sep 10, 1944, ordering the public execution of deserters (t77/869/5928 *et seq.*).

page 735 The western counter-offensive began to crystallise in Hitler's order of Aug 29, 1944: 'There is only one possibility, and that is to wade into the American right flank and thus endanger the enemy's advance into Bel-

gium itself from the rear' (Army Group B, war diary annexes); the plan took clearer shape in his order of Sep 3 to Rundstedt (*ibid.*, and war diary, Commander in Chief West). Kreipe's diary of Sep 11 shows that Hitler was still half-looking at the Vosges offensive idea, but then he switched attention to the Ardennes. See the ETHINT interrogations of Jodl and his staff officer Major Herbert Büchs.

page 736 Kaltenbrunner's damning reports are in BA file NS 6/41.

page 737 Schörner's visit is recorded in Jodl's diary, Sep 16, 1944. When Dönitz heard of the plan to abandon Estonia, he hurried to Hitler but could not change his mind; on the eighteenth the evacuation began (naval staff diary, Sep 15; and see Schörner's teletype to Keitel, Sep 9, in film T77/778).

page 737 Both Ribbentrop and Colonel Bogislaw von Bonin – of the General Staff – reported Hitler's 'pawn in hand' argument under interrogation in 1945. On Sep 12, 1944, Himmler jotted down as Item 9 for discussion with Hitler the words 'Britain or Russia'; and as Item 10, 'Russia – Japan.' Both items were endorsed 'dealt with' (T175/94/5062). Schellenberg's 1944 file on the talks in Stockholm is on T175/579 0122 *et seq*.

page 737 On the Arnhem Operation, I used General Kurt Student's account in the journal *Der Frontsoldat erzählt*, 1952; Schleifenbaum's letter to Hermann Giesler, Jan 11, 1945 (T81/122/4665 *et seq.*).; an unpublished letter by Colonel W. Harzer, Dec 1955; and entries in the naval staff war diary.

page 740 Himmler's visit to Hitler on Sep 26, 1944, is reconstructed from his hand-written agenda (T175/94/5056); from Bormann's letter to his wife that day; from Kaltenbrunner's interrogation of Canaris and Pfuhlstein, Sep 21, (NS 6/41); from the war diary of the chief of army personnel, Sep 4; from manuscripts by Jodl, 1944 (T77/775), Huppenkothen, 1945 (BDC), and Kiessel and Georg Thomas; and from interrogations of Jodl, Lahousen – who confirmed in Nuremberg on Nov 12, 1945, that Canaris and Oster had betrayed the date of 'Yellow'; he declined to say more as both were now dead – and of Huppenkothen, Kopkow, and Thomas.

page 742 Hitler's illness: Morell's diaries (see note to page 426), and the testimonies of Giesing, Hasselbach, and Brandt; it is referred to in Bormann's letters of Sep 30 and Oct 1 and 4, in the manuscripts of the secretary Traudl Junge and of Kurt Assmann, and in my 1965 interviews with Saur and Puttkamer. After visiting him on Oct 5, 1944, Schmundt's widow wrote in her diary: 'With Puttkamer this afternoon in the Wolf's Lair. Führer bedridden. Said he had lost his finest man' – *i.e.*, her husband.

page 744 Morell wrote on Oct 23, 1944: 'The last few weeks have not been too pleasant for me. . . But the Führer was so charming to me that this more than makes up for it.'

page 745 Rosenberg's report on the evacuation of Estonia, dated Sep 28, 1944 (NG–1094).

page 745 Lieutenant General Kirchheim, member of the court of honour against Speidel, described the proceedings in SRGG.1180, in GRGG. 294 and in GRGG.296 (PRO files WO.208/4169

and /4177); see too General Thumm's remarks in GRGG.297 on Rommel's suicide. Julius Schaub's chauffeur, Heinz Doose, drove the car in which Rommel swallowed the poison; I have his interrogation. The rest of my narrative relies on interrogations of Keitel and Jodl; my interviews of the adjutants Günsche, Amsberg, and Göhler; written statements of the stenographers Buchholz and Krieger; and a note on Keitel's talk with his son in the Nuremberg cells on Sep 21, 1946.

page 747 In Himmler's files is a teletype report from SS Colonel Kurt Becher dated Aug 25, 1944. The fact that 'three hundred items [Jews] had unconditionally crossed the frontier' would affect the other side's opinion that 'we only want their agreement to exploit it for propaganda purposes' (T175/59/4473 *et seq.*). See too in this connection Schellenberg's explanation noted by Krosigk on Apr 15, 1945: the treatment of the Jews was a folly, he said, as two thirds of all Jews lived outside the German domain.

Quite wrongly the Reichsführer was being blamed for what 'admittedly occurred in his name, but not at his behest.' They had allowed 1,200 Jews to go to Switzerland, with the object of improving Himmler's image abroad. On Apr 19, 1945, Himmler himself claimed to Krosigk 'that for the last two years nothing else has happened to the Jews still left in Germany – we need them as a pawn for all the coming negotiations.'

page 748 On Hungary's preparations for defection: OCMH and US State Department interrogations of Greiffenberg and Veesenmayer; Kasche's note on Hitler's talk with the 'Poglavnik,' Sep 18, 1944 (AA serial 1770); and naval staff diary, Sep 26–28.

page 748 For Hitler's remarks to Vörös, see Greiffenberg's telegram to Berlin on his talk with Geza Lakatos, the Hungarian prime minister, Sep 15 (T77/869/5914).

page 751 Winkelmann's account dated Oct 25, 1944, is in Himmler's files (T175/59/4489 *et seq.*).

page 751 The appointment book kept by Linge for the Führer from Oct 14, 1944, to Feb 28, 1945, was found by British officers on Sep 10, 1945, in the ruins of the chancellery (T84/22); with it was Hitler's appointment pad of Apr 1945 (AL/1488/4).

page 752 Hitler kept his promise not to blacken Horthy's name. See the DNB (German News Agency) dispatch of Oct 17, and Helmut Sündermann's diary of the same date. Editors had been instructed, 'No attacks are to be made on the former regent.'

page 753 A folder of documents on the bunker's air-conditioning plant is in the BA, file R58/1057.

page 753 Jodl's note on the Führer's war conference on Oct 25, 1944, survives. 'Russian atrocities during occupation of East Prussian territory must be publicised by Wehrmacht propaganda branch. Photographs, eyewitness accounts, documentary reports, etc., for this' (1787–PS).

page 754 Hitler's reaction to the propaganda reports about Majdanek was described by Sonnleitner; by Heinz Lorenz (CSDIC interrogation); and by Helmut Sündermann, diary, Oct 27, 1944. Rudolf von Ribbentrop described in an interview with me his father's per-

plexity. In September 1944 the Moscow propaganda newspaper *Freies Deutschland* had also reported on the 'death camp' at Lublin; when the turncoat General Moser made a broadcast about Lublin over Moscow radio, the FA sent a transcript to Goebbels's ministry. The latter decided against issuing any rebuttal, because 'in such a propaganda battle we should be wholly on the defensive' (Yivo, Occ E2 – 68).

page 755 On Göring's decline: interrogations of Göring and Galland; Speer's chronicle, Oct 7, 1944; the Kreipe diary; and Koller's note, Nov 5.

page 755 The disappointing performance of the Me-262 as a fighter is highlighted in Messerschmitt director Fritz Seiler's papers (FD.4924/45) – a report by Ludwig Bölkow dated Oct 25 – and a memo in Bormann's files, dated Oct 21 (NS.6/152). The first Heinkel 162 flew on Dec 6, 1944; it was an aerodynamic disaster.

page 760 The quotation is from Hitler's war conference on Nov 6, 1944 (Heiber, page 711). See the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Nov 14, and Himmler's files (T175/524) for such rumours. Hitler also mentioned them during lunch with Szálasi on Dec 4. Baron Gabriel von Kemény, the Hungarian foreign minister, later reported: 'The Führer said with a laugh that the enemy camp has repeatedly proclaimed him dead – crediting him with a complete nervous breakdown or rumouring a cancer of the throat' (T175/130/6884).

page 764 The stenographers recorded Hitler's speech of Dec 12, 1944. See General Heilmann's description, SRGG. 1142.

page 768 The quotation is from Hitler's secret speech of Dec 28.

page 768 According to the naval staff diary, Dec 1, 1944, Colonel von Bonin expressed confidence in the defensive strength along the eastern front, 'especially in the areas of East Prussia, Warsaw, and Kraków.'

page 768 On the planning of the Ardennes offensive, I used interrogations of Westphal, Jodl, Keitel, Koller, Manteuffel, and Büchs; the diaries of Jodl, Commander in Chief West, the OKW, and the naval staff; Jodl's notes on Führer conferences (1787–PS); Wilhelm Scheidt's manuscript, and various published monographs.

page 770 On the gasoline allocation for the offensive, see Jodl's diary, Nov 10 and Dec 18. According to the OKW diary, Jan 4, 1945, more than the amount requested was supplied; but consumption was higher than foreseen. Keitel ordered on Dec 7 stern action against unauthorised motorisation of the troops (T77 778). The effect of the emphasis on the western front was grave in the east; from the draft General Staff war diary (T78/339) we learn that by Jan 5, 1945 General von Greim's Sixth Air Force had fuel reserves for only three days.

page 771 The excessive gasoline consumption is mentioned in the naval staff diary as early as Dec 17, 1944 – Day Two of the offensive. See Hitler's account of their errors on Dec 28, 1944 (Heiber, page 746); Bach-Zelewski, who attended the speech, stated that Rundstedt thanked Hitler for the 'harsh but just' criticism (US Army manuscript B–252).

page 772 Wolf Junge mentioned Hitler's mocking words in his manuscript

(in my collection, HZ). Guderian's position on Dec 20 can be reconstructed from his briefing notes (BA, II H 402/11).

page 772 The quotation is from Hitler's talk with General Wolfgang Thomale, Dec 30, 1944 (Heiber, pages 779 *et seq*.).

page 773 On May 23, 1945, Milch said, 'Hewel . . . told me of Stalin's offer of negotiations fourteen days before the Russians staged their offensive on the Vistula front' (SRGG.1255C).

page 774 In addition to the German version of Hitler's talk with Szálasi and Baron Kemény's version in Himmler's files, two Hungarian versions exist (T973/1 and /14).

page 776 For Guderian's visit to Hitler on Jan 9, 1945, I used – with caution – his own memoirs and the IfZ file ZS.57, and the fragmentary remarks by Hitler in his war conferences later that day and on Jan 10 and 27, and a manuscript by Colonel Freytag von Loringhoven (Guderian's adjutant) found among the general's papers.

page 776 For Germany's over-confidence in the eastern front see *e.g.*, Jodl's speech to allied military attachés in Berlin on Jan 13, 1945, 4 P.M. (T77/775/0754 *et seq*.). and the OCMH interrogation of Bonin.

page 778 The conversation is recorded in Traudl Junge's manuscript.

page 778 Gehlen assessed Stalin's attack strength at 225 rifle divisions, 22 tank corps, 29 other tank formations, and 3 cavalry corps. But at Yalta Stalin – who surely had no reason to play down his contribution – stated he had only 180 divisions in Poland. General S. M. Shtemenko wrote in the Russian history, *The General Staff in the War Years* (Moscow, 1968): 'At the time our divisions averaged only about four thousand men each.'

page 778 Guderian's cable to Hitler, dated Jan 14, 1945, is in the war diary of the General Staff Operations branch (annexes, T78/305/6032 *et seq*.). He reported that the enemy had succeeded in a strategic breakthrough from the western part of the Baranov bridgehead. 'I therefore request the immediate transfer of several panzer and further infantry divisions from the west to the eastern front.' And see naval staff war diary, Jan 14, for Admiral Voss's account.

page 778 Jodl records Guderian's phone call in his diary. It was followed by a telegram at 7:30 P.M., dictated by telephone to Hitler's train at 2:25 A.M., repeating the demand for reinforcements for Army Group A. Traudl Junge recorded Otto Günsche's witticism.

page 779 Dönitz's adjutant, W. Lüdde-Neurath, described the scene with Harpe on Jan 19, 1945 in his book *Regierung Dönitz* (Berlin, 1964).

page 780 Dr. Werner von Schmieden described his mission under OCMH interrogation; I also used the testimonies of Fritz Hesse, interpreter Paul Schmidt, and Ribbentrop's secretary Fräulein Blank.

page 781 The new OKW master plan is summarised in the naval staff diary, Jan 19, 1945, but is not mentioned at all in Schramm's OKW war diary.

page 781 On the withdrawal of the Sixth SS Panzer Army to Hungary – instead of the eastern front – I used the annexes to the General Staff operations branch war diary (T78/305), the OKW

war diary, and Jodl's notes after Führer conferences (1787–PS); see also Sündermann's diary, Jan 20, 1945, and Hitler's conference with Dönitz three days later, which puts the Hungarian and Viennese oilfields foremost among defence priorities.

page 782 The conference leading to Himmler's appointment is in Jodl's diary, Jan 21, 1945. Hitler's resulting order was sent by Bormann to the gauleiters (IfZ file ED-36) and to Himmler himself; see the war diary of Army Group Vistula T311/167/8516 *et seq*., and the General Staff war diary, t78/305/5979.

page 783 Zhukov's order is appended to Gehlen's report of Feb 22, 1945, 'Red Army's Behaviour on German Soil' (T311/168/0014); a copy in large typescript for Hitler is in General Staff files (T78/304/5627).

page 784 I used Karl Wolff's testimony at Nuremberg, Dec 1, 1947, and in IfZ file ZS.317. He evidently saw Hitler on Jan 6 or 7, 1945 (Linge and Bormann diaries).

page 784 See Hans Kissel's study of the Volkssturm in *WR*, 1960, pages 219 *et seq*.

page 785 On the transfer of anti-aircraft batteries from the Reich to the Oder front see Jodl's note on Hitler's conference of Feb 1, 1945, and the war diary of the OKL operations staff (T321/10/6799 *et seq*.).

page 785 Himmler recalled the crisis in conversation with Schwerin von Krosigk on Apr 19 (diary); and see the Reichsführer's pious order of Feb 1, 1945: 'The thaw which has begun at this precise stage in the conflict is a gift of Fate. . . The Lord God has not forgotten His worthy German people' (T78/304/5774).

page 786 See Heinz Schön, *Die Gustloff Katastrophe* (Motorbuch Verlag, 1999); using new sources Schön calculated the death toll at 9,343. He was one of the survivors.

page 786 For Göring's punitive measures, see his order of Jan 16, 1945 (T177/315007 *et seq*.). Lammers quotes Bormann's advice in a letter of Apr 24 (T580/265).

page 787 I corresponded with Professor Hermann Giesler on his model for Linz; Hitler's plans are described by the local gauleiter, August Eigruber, in a speech there on Nov 25, 1942 (T175/124/9670 *et seq*.).; I also used Linge's diary, Feb 9–10, and Sündermann's, Feb 14, 1945, and Wilhelm Scheidt's manuscript.

page 787 Kaltenbrunner told Glaise-Horstenau that Hitler had promised that Austria would recover the frontiers of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy (SAIC-IX/10, dated Jul 5, 1945, NA: RG.332, entry ETO MIS-V Sect., Box 73).

page 788 On Ribbentrop's last peace attempt, I used Guderian's testimony, and an overheard conversation of Steengracht on Jul 14, 1945: 'So Guderian came to Ribbentrop and told him, "It's all over. The game's up. Their tank superiority is eight to one, their aircraft sixteen to one." Then Ribbentrop went to Hitler and told him that. Hitler retorted that he would not allow the foreign office to concern itself with such criticism' (X-P.18).

page 790 On the proposal to kill Allied prisoners in reprisal, I relied on Goebbels's diaries and the testimony of Ribbentrop, Scheidt, Steengracht, Sün-

dermann, Jodl, and the stenographer Krieger – who particularly recalled Keitel's opposition. Also, Hitler's talks with Dönitz, Feb 19–21, and a memo by Jodl (ND, 606–D). Linge's diary of Feb 21 records: '3:15 – 3:55 P.M. [Hitler] strolls with foreign minister.' The other topic was clearly Ribbentrop's unauthorised peace feelers, for that same day according to the Weizsäcker diary, Ribbentrop urgently cancelled his previous instructions to ventilate armistice proposals through neutral channels.

page 791 The description is by Gauleiter Karl Wahl under US Army interrogation, Jun 1, 1945. Gauleiter Friedrich Rainer also described the 'glass of water' scene. And see the account in Helmut Sündermann's diary, Feb 25, 1945. 'He [Hitler] spoke with a firm voice, and particularly moved the gauleiters with one sentence: "You may see my hand tremble sometimes today, and perhaps even my head now and then; but my heart – never!" Herbert Backe quoted the identical words to his wife for her diary on Mar 10, 1945.

page 792 Bormann's memorandum is in the BA Schumacher collection, file 368. The women's battalion is also mentioned by Göring under interrogation on May 24.

page 793 There is a file of telephone conversations between the General Staff and Army Group Vistula in the latter's war diary annexes (T311/167–169); I also used General Erhard Raus's postwar manuscript (D–189).

page 794 Meissner related this under US State Department interrogation, Aug 31, 1945.

page 794 The conference is recorded in Jodl's diary. General Eberhard Kinzel telephoned Army Group Vistula afterward that Hitler had ordered the Third Panzer Army to revert to the defensive at once, as 'the imminent attack on Berlin' would necessitate the disengagement of various panzer and panzergrenadier divisions for that front sector (T311/169/0913).

page 795 See *e.g.*, the teletype from Foreign Armies East to the General Staff on Apr 16, 1945 (T78/304/5405).

page 795 Copies of Admiral Dönitz's notes are in Bormann's files (T81/5/2954 *et seq*.).

page 796 On 'Operation *Werewolf*' – the Luftwaffe kamikaze attack – see the OKL war diary, Mar 18 and Apr 3, 6, and 7, 1945.

page 796 In describing life in Hitler's Berlin bunker I used the manuscripts or testimony of Schaub, Christa Schroeder, Speer, Puttkamer, Göhler, Below, Scheidt, Guderian, Saur, Jodl, Keitel, Günsche, General Erich Dethleffsen, and others.

page 798 The outburst is described by General Koller in a letter to the Nuremberg lawyer Professor Franz Exner dated Mar 25, 1946, and by the stenographer Gerhard Herrgesell, Jul 19, 1945. A few days beforehand, Professor Giesler's mother had been killed on the road by an Allied fighter plane, which may have influenced Hitler.

page 798 Schmieden's failure is related in his interrogations. Fritz Hesse went to Sweden on Feb 17 with Ribbentrop's peace proposals; but on Mar 15 the Swedish journalist Arvid Fredborg compromised them in a *Svenska Dagbladet* article, which Kaltenbrunner at once reported to Hitler. See Sündermann's diary, Mar 18, on

this, and the CSDIC (WEA) BAOR interrogation of Karl Georg Pfleiderer, the former German consul general in Stockholm. Ribbentrop described the Moellhausen mission in some detail in his memoirs. An interrogation of Dr. Ernst Jahr, chief of the ecclesiastical affairs branch of the Gestapo, stated on May 3, 1946, that Ribbentrop had also sent Bishop Heckel – director of the foreign affairs section of the German Evangelical church – to Stockholm during Mar 1945 to open up ecclesiastical channels to London.

page 798 The quotation is from General Koller's diary, Mar 28, 1945. See too Göring's OCMH interrogation, Jul 20, 1945.

page 799 At Hitler's conference on Mar 8, 1945, after the Remagen bridge scandal. Sündermann noted in his diary: 'The Führer also plans to send in flying courts-martial to stamp out these signs of dissolution. I have noted down two of his angry outbursts: "Only Russian methods can help us now," and "If we lose the war the Germans will be exterminated anyway – so it's a good thing to exterminate some of these creatures now."' The culprits at Remagen were executed.

page 800 Among Robert Ley's papers – among the files of the American prosecutor Justice Robert H. Jackson – I found a manuscript about Hitler.

page 801 Speer did put up a tough fight against the destruction orders. On Apr 3, 1945, Milch noted in his diary: 'Speer relates his battle with F[ührer] over demolitions.'

page 801 Bormann circulated the OKW order (signed by Jodl) to all gauleiters on Mar 30, 1945 (T81/5/3034 *et seq.*).

page 802 In addition to Heinrici's notes – appended to the war diary of his army group (T311/169) – a valuable source is General Theodor Busse's article on the Ninth Army's operations in *WR*, 1955, pages 159 *et seq.* I also used the daily notes written by Guderian's and Krebs's adjutants after Hitler's conferences (T78/305).

page 803 Goebbels related all this to Schwerin von Krosigk; see the latter's diary, Apr 15, 1945, and Goebbels's diary.

page 804 The first Mark XXI submarine (U-2511, Captain Adalbert Schnee) put out on Mar 17, 1945, but was delayed in home waters by air raids and did not finally commence operations from Bergen until Apr 30 – only to be recalled almost immediately by Dönitz upon Hitler's death.

page 805 There is a folder of the gauleiters' teletype reports to Bormann during Apr 1945 on microfilm T580/43; I also used his diary.

page 806 Hitler's supposition that Stalin would first drive into Bohemia is clear from the adjutants' notes on his war conferences from Mar 28 to Apr 6 (T78/305).

page 807 Quartermaster-general Alfred Toppe's letter to Keitel, Apr 15, 1945, is on microfilm T77/778.

page 807 Fegelein's adjutant Johannes Göhler told me of Hitler's instruction to Himmler, which he witnessed.

page 808 Busse's words are quoted by Goebbels in the Krosigk diary.

page 809 On the evacuation of the diplomatic corps, see Ribbentrop's papers (T580/266).

page 809 The adjutant Albrecht was

presumed killed in the defence of the chancellery.

page 809 The prisoner interrogations were reported by Colonel Gerhard Wessel on Apr 15, 1945 (T78/305).

page 809 After the war Speer made little secret of his part in persuading Heinrici to abandon Berlin. See his CIOS interrogation, Jun 1, 1945, and his conversation with Milch (diary, Jul 1947): 'Hitler stayed in Berlin to organise the resistance. This Speer thwarted with General Heinrici and his Chief of Staff Kinzel, who sacrificed Berlin at his request. Only thus could be prevented the large-scale demolition of Berlin bridges and factories which Hitler had ordained should the battle come.'

There is a record of Speer's visit to Heinrici's HQ on Apr 15, 1945, in the army group war diary (T311/169/1719), but it is vague: Speer was against any battle for Berlin because of the civilian casualties and because of the destruction of vital industrial and traffic bridges that Hitler had ordered; should Army Group Vistula's front be breached, it proposed to 'pull back Ninth Army on both sides past Berlin.' (Hitler, of course, was never told this).

Hitler had on Apr 4 personally instructed Heinrici that 'a commission must immediately be set up to prepare and supervise the demolition of bridges in Greater Berlin,' but that on no account were the principal traffic bridges to be so prepared (General Staff diary, annexes, T78/305/6931 and 6945).

page 810 The words are from Christa Schroeder's shorthand notes written in May 1945 and transcribed at my request.

page 811 My narrative of the last battle for Berlin is based on the war diaries of the General Staff (T78/304) and its annexes (*ibid.*, and T78/305), and of Army Group Vistula (T311/169 and 170); on the diaries of Bormann, General Koller (ADI[K] Report 348/1945), and Jodl; on interrogations and interviews of those concerned; and on the fragmentary shorthand notes of Hitler's last staff conferences salvaged by Heinz Lorenz in 1945 and published in *Der Spiegel*, No. 3, 1966 (their authenticity is established beyond doubt by official British papers I have seen).

page 811 A German translation of the British 21st Army Group's '*Eclipse*' folder is in General Staff records (T78/434/5864 *et seq.*). Keitel initialled it on Apr 15.

page 811 Wessel's report of Apr 15, 1945, is on microfilm T78/304/4862.

page 812 On dealings with the British and Americans: Krosigk diary, Apr 15, 1945, and interrogations of Karl Wolff in December 1947. Wolff's appointment with the Führer 'before staff conference' on Apr 18 is noted on Hitler's desk pad, preserved in British Cabinet Office files. Kaltenbrunner, under US Third Army interrogation on Jun 21, 1945 claimed to have asked Hitler for permission to contact the Western Allies. 'Hitler answered that "one naturally had to listen to such opinions."' There are files on the Wolff negotiations ('Crossword') in Leahy's papers (NA) and boxes 20 and 21 of the Allen Dulles papers, Princeton University.

page 815 Hitler's remarks in private were recalled under Soviet interrogation by his staff members Linge and Günsche – a copy is in my possession – and by Traudl Junge in her manuscript

memoirs.

page 815 Axmann described Hitler's speech under interrogation on Jan 14, 1946.

page 816 Bormann certainly gained the impression that Hitler would leave for the south soon; see the manuscript by Bormann's secretary, Ilse Krüger, in British files. So did Jodl: his wife wrote in her diary that Apr 20: 'A[lfred] told me this evening that we may fall back briefly in the north, but that F[ührer's] intention is to go to the south.' Milch, who met Speer the next day, noted in his own diary Speer's 'good impression of Führer, bad impression of "that dodger Göring."'

page 816 Quoted from her May 1945 shorthand note.

page 818 Weidling died in Soviet captivity, but wrote a long account of the battle, published in *Voennoistoricheskii Zhurnal*, Moscow, Oct – Nov 1961.

page 819 The tumultuous events of Apr 22, 1945, are described by the diaries of Koller and Jodl Apr 22–23; by memos of Koller, and Lieutenant Volck, Apr 25; in interrogations of Keitel, Jodl, Christian, Freytag von Loringhoven, Below, Colonel von Brauchitsch, Lorenz, and the stenographers Haagen and Herrgesell; and in written manuscripts of Günsche, Linge, Ilse Krüger, Traudl Junge, and Keitel.

page 821 An important private letter by Eva Braun to her sister, dated Apr 23, 1945, describes the mood. The decision to turn round the Twelfth Army to fight the Russians – nothing less than an invitation to the Allies to take Berlin – was made by 5 P.M., for at that time Krebs telephoned it to Heinrici (T311/170/2182 *et seq*.).

page 822 German Radio broadcast Hitler's decision to stay in Berlin at 12:40 P.M., Apr 23, 1945 (BBC Monitoring Report). Among the papers of Ribbentrop's Nuremberg defence counsel I found an eleven-page account by the foreign minister (Rep. 502 AXA 132). He describes arriving at Hitler's shelter after the regular war conference on Apr 23: 'While I was there I learned that it was by no means certain whether the Führer would be leaving for southern Germany, even temporarily. I thereupon spoke to Fräulein Eva Braun and asked her to influence the Führer to go to southern Germany, because if he was cut off in Berlin he could no longer command and then the front lines might easily just cave in. Fräulein Braun told me she couldn't understand either – the previous day the Führer had been talking of probably flying down south; apparently somebody had talked him around to the opposite view.'

page 823 For Holste's account of the last days see GRGG.301 in PRO file WO.208/4178.

page 823 Ribbentrop's secret letter to Churchill was circulated as a memorandum, CP (45) 48 to the British Cabinet; it is in PRO file CAB.66/66. Ribbentrop swore in it that both he and Hitler had always striven for rapprochement with Britain; Churchill sent the letter to Stalin on Jul 12, 1945 – 'it is exceptionally long and tedious.' Ribbentrop described his last meeting with Hitler in several interrogations, in Rep. 502 AXA 132, and his memoirs. In his other manuscript, Rep. 502 AXA 122, he proposed repeating the four main points of the offer to the British prosecuting counsel Sir David Maxwell-

Fyfe, since he had received no reply from Churchill. According to his state secretary, Steengracht, Ribbentrop told him after that Apr 23, 1945, meeting: 'You know, the Führer has proved right after all. The last thing he told me was, "I actually came to power ten years too soon. Another ten years and I would really have kneaded the Party into shape." . . . I wrote that letter to Churchill because I had to. In our last discussion the Führer – he was quite calm – told me he had never wanted any harm to come to Britain. The big handshake with "Germanic" England – that had always been his goal' (X-P. 18).

page 824 The telegram draft was found in Göring's possession as a prisoner (DE 426/DIS. 202). I also used an interrogation of Below, and the manuscripts of Ilse Krüger and Hans Rattenhuber (in Russian archives); and Koller's second-hand version (diary, Apr 23). Göring's telegram to Ribbentrop and Speer's letter to Galland are on microfilm T77/775. In Dönitz's last diary (T608/1) we find a telephone call from Bormann on Apr 23, after which – at 10:45 P.M. – the admiral phoned General Hans-Jürgen Stumpff. 'I have the following Führer order for you: "The Reichsmarschall ordered that the Reich government . . . in the north are to fly south. This is to be prevented at all costs. You [Stumpff] are to see to that."'

page 824 These original telegrams and Bormann's handwritten letter to Himmler (page 826) were found in July 1945 in the bunker's ruins by Colonel John Bradin, US Army; his son provided copies to me (now in my collection at the Institut für Zeitgeschichte). At my suggestion, he subsequently donated the originals to USAMHI archives.

page 826 Hitler's order on Apr 24, 1945 (evening) is in OKW files (T77/775/1198 *et seq.*).

page 826 In his book *Soldat*, Siegfried Knappe reports that Ribbentrop visited the army headquarters at Waldsieversdorf in April 1945. 'I received a call from Panzer Division Müncheberg informing us that von Ribbentrop had requested that he be allowed to accompany a combat reconnaissance patrol. I relayed that information to Weidling, who refused the request, pointing out quite logically that at Ribbentrop's age and without infantry training or experience – and wearing a uniform that would have made him stand out as a very inviting target – he would certainly be killed on an infantry patrol.'

page 829 A long interrogation report on Hanna Reitsch – Greim's female admirer – is in my possession.

page 832 Transcripts of the letters written on Apr 28, 1945 by Joseph and Magda Goebbels to Harald Quandt, her son by her first marriage, are in my collection.

page 832 Texts – not always accurate – of the last days' signals from the chancellery are in the war diaries of the OKW command staffs north and/or south.

page 833 The BBC Monitoring Report noted Himmler's surrender offer at 1:55 P.M. About 5 P.M. Dönitz asked if the OKW was aware of this report. Himmler denied it, and Krosigk – Ribbentrop's successor – repeated this *dementi* to their Japanese allies through a telegram to Ambassador Stahmer in Tokyo on May 6, 1945. Precisely how far Himmler did in fact go is uncertain.

Reporting an earlier meeting between him and Count Folke Bernadotte, the British envoy in Stockholm cabled London on Apr 13 that Himmler had *refused* to consider a surrender as he was bound by his oath to the Führer, to whom he owed everything and whom he could not desert; Hitler was now interested only in the future architecture of Germany's cities, according to Himmler. Perhaps the British intention was to discredit Himmler deliberately.

page 833 Bormann's cable to Munich is quoted in Dönitz's files, T608/1; so is Admiral Voss's radio message.

page 833 In an order to Heinrici and Manteuffel that Apr 28, 1945, Keitel refused to cancel the dismissal decision, and he placed General von Tippelskirch (Twenty-first Army) in command of the army group (T77/779/5697 and T77/1432/0025). Dönitz's opinion is cited by W. Baum in his study of the German military collapse, *WR*, 1960, page 251. Keitel's view is in his *Memoirs*.

page 834 Hanna Reitsch read the letters and decided not to forward them; the farewell letter of Eva Braun ('With the Führer I have had everything. To die now beside him completes my happiness') she tore up – no doubt out of pique.

page 836 The letter to Wenck read as follows: 'Esteemed General Wenck! As can be seen from the attached dispatches, the SS Reichsführer Himmler made the Anglo-Americans an offer which would have surrendered our nation unconditionally to the plutocrats. Only the Führer – and he alone – can bring about a turning point. The prerequisite to that is the immediate establishment of contact between the Wenck Army and ourselves, so that the Führer regains freedom of action for domestic and diplomatic moves. Yours, Krebs, Chief of General Staff. Heil Hitler, yours, M. Bormann.'

page 836 For Hitler's coming suicide the generals blamed the Party, and vice versa. General Wilhelm Burgdorf wrote on Apr 29 to Schörner that Hitler had signed his will 'today under the shattering news of the Reichsführer's treachery.' Bormann emphasised the failure of the generals in his letter to Dönitz: 'As our position seems hopeless because of the non-arrival of every division, the Führer last night dictated the enclosed Political Testament.'

page 836 Hitler's last letter to Keitel was destroyed by the courier, Colonel von Below, on May 2, 1945; he reconstructed it under CSDIC interrogation in March 1946.

page 837 My principal witness is Otto Günsche himself, with whom I tape-recorded many hours of his recollections in 1967 and again in 1971 and who has remained in contact with me until this day (1999). Furthermore, I used Allied interrogations of Kempka – who helped in the attempt to burn the bodies – the secretaries Gerda Christian, Traudl Junge, and Ilse Krüger, and Goebbels's adjutant Günther Schwägermann. Contrary to the otherwise reliable account of Lev Bezymenski, *Der Tod des Adolf Hitler* (Hamburg, 1968) – based on Soviet documents – there is no doubt that Hitler shot himself, as in fact Axmann privately told Milch in prison on Mar 1, 1948 (diary). We have only the KGB's word for it that fragments of a cyanide phial were found in Hitler's jaw.

Life magazine published in July 1945 William Vandivert's photographs of the bunker room and couch, on which the blood stains are clearly visible; Ben Swearingen, the late Texan collector, years afterwards purchased that piece of the couch's fabric from a Russian source. Both Kempka and Rattenhuber (manuscript dated May 20, 1945, Moscow) noticed bloodstains on the carpet.

For a differing account of Hitler's death, the reader's attention is directed to Anton Joachimsthaler, *The Last Days of Hitler* (London, 1996): coming from a modern German author, it is noteworthy to find a conclusion that Hitler died with courage and dignity.

According to Goebbels's telegram to Dönitz on May 1, Hitler died at 3:30 p.m., Apr 30, 1945.

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Still in their original 1945 Agfa boxes, the priceless photographic plates containing the Goebbels diaries are stacked on the table in Moscow for this book's author to open for the first time in June 1992 (AUTHOR'S COLLECTION)

Conflicting Views on **Goebbels: Mastermind of the Third Reich**, by David Irving

"THIS IS A REPELLENT BOOK, AND NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF ITS SUBJECT. Irving (*Göring*) has been increasingly under fire for exploiting seemingly indefatigable research to distort history. In the book in hand, he uses enough pejoratives to sustain the illusion of objectivity regarding Hitler's propaganda chief, yet suggests that the admittedly bad man had a cause not entirely bad in itself. Nazi brutality is almost always retaliation for the plots of international Jewry and the criminality of domestic Jews. Even the books notoriously burned are "decadent and anti-German.' The term *Redakteur* (editor) 'to Goebbels' sensitive ear had a Jewish ring.' Protesters in Saarbrücken are 'a clamoring ragbag of communists, Jews, freemasons, and disgruntled émigrés.' There is always, in Irving's own words, a 'Jewish problem' that Goebbels struggles to solve. Much of the book, heavily indebted to the self-serving Goebbels diaries, is in such a vein. . . .

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"SILENCING MR IRVING WOULD BE A HIGH PRICE TO PAY FOR FREEDOM from the annoyance that he causes us. The fact is that he knows more about National Socialism than most professional scholars in his field, and students of the years 1933–1945 owe more than they are always willing to admit to his energy as a researcher and to the scope and vigor of his publications. . . . There is nothing absolute about historical truth. What we consider as such is only an estimation, based upon what the best available evidence tells us. It must constantly be tested against new information and new interpretations that appear, however implausible they may be, or it will lose its vitality and degenerate into dogma or shibboleth. Such people as David Irving, then, have an indispensable part in the historical enterprise, and we dare not disregard their views."

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"IRVING ATTRACTS CREDIBILITY AND ATTENTION BY HIS indefatigable energy, intelligence and resourcefulness. Compared with most British historians, often a dull, lazy breed, Irving has spent a lifetime ceaselessly criss-crossing the globe to gather eyewitness evidence about World War II."

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Goebbels

Mastermind of the Third Reich

TEXT was only recently identified in the Moscow archives, and Mr Irving is the first writer to use them. For this, and for his archival research generally, he deserves every credit."
— Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Sunday Telegraph*, London

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— John Keegan, *The Daily Telegraph*, London

F

The Irving Backlist



David Smith, The Guardian (1977)

and what a list it is!

Many of David Irving's books are already back in print; by the end of 2002 we shall have most available again at regular prices. Some are only in German. Register your interest in any title with us and we will keep you informed.

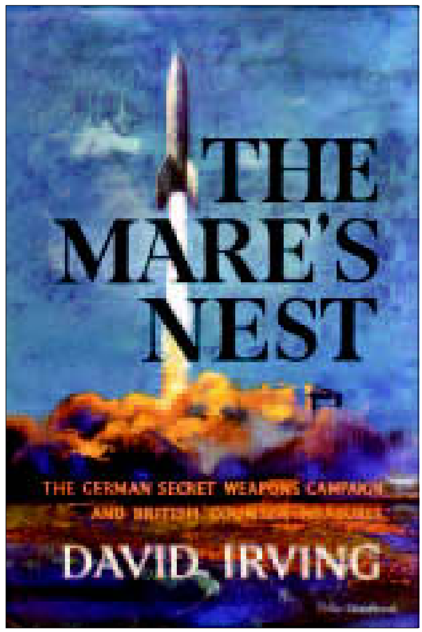
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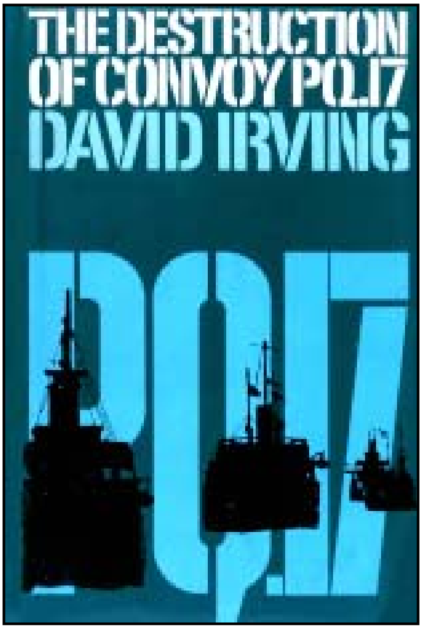
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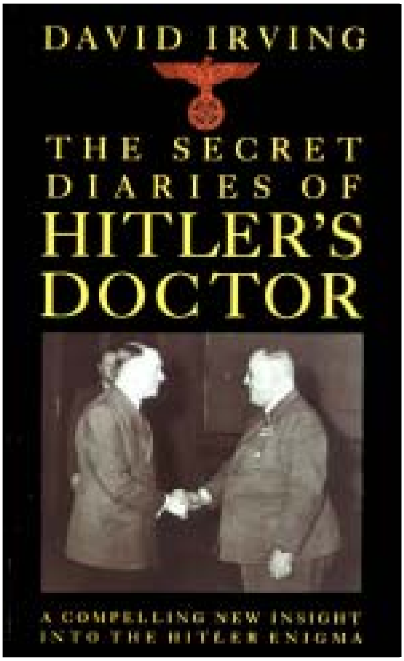
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